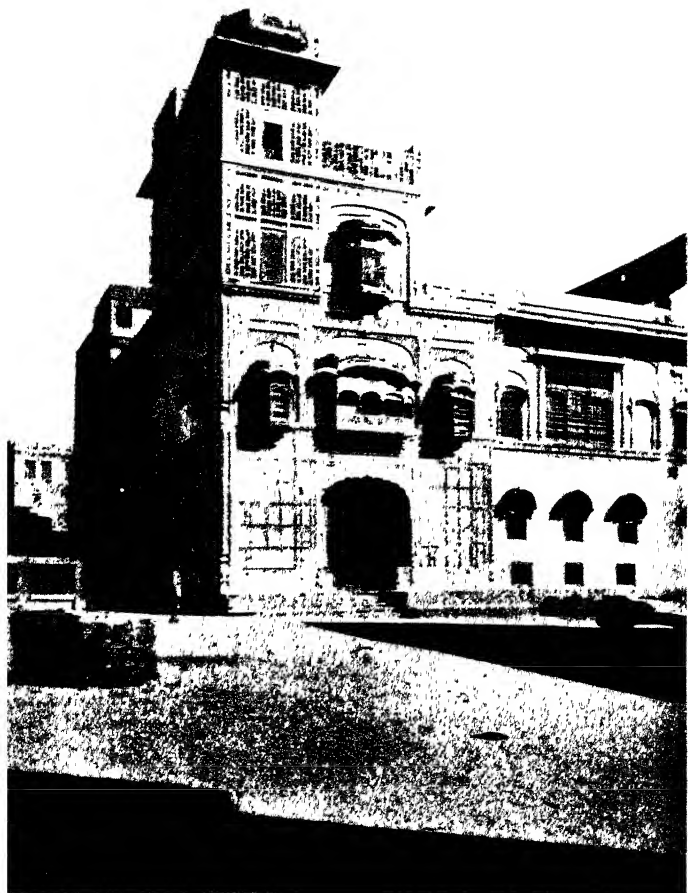


THE INDIAN CHILD'S MOTHER



AN OLD PALACE IN LAHORE (*see* p. vii)

THE INDIAN CHILD'S MOTHER

BY
A. D.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION
OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS

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TO
SHUROTH MOHANI DATTA

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

FOREWORD

MY first impression of India as a whole—of the sight of her face, the sound of her voice—dates back to what I saw from the roof of an old palace in Lahore and from what I heard while listening to a friend.

We used to sit, in the evening, in a chubara next to the throne room, and converse about many things. This upper room was at a great height. It was a watch-tower from which we could see the whole city and the plain beyond—as far as the round rim of the horizon. Across the Ravi the tomb of Jahangir commands the plain; here and there are dotted numerous villages.

As night fell, the street below became a gulf of darkness, the passers-by as shadows on the patches of moonlight, their footfall too faint to reach the ear; farther down a crooked lane was the blurred outline of a Hindu temple; at the other end of the city, hardly visible in the smoke haze, rose the spire of the Christian church.

It was a picture representing the story of successive generations: a vision of India herself—a vast motherland receiving every shade of religious belief, suffering from time immemorial the invasion of

foreign armies, and yet remaining unchanged. We looked down from the quiet moonlight towards the distances and listened to the cry of the city which is ever the same and which seemed as if it would remain as it had been for ever.

Yet, even then, was there not a whisper of change— like the flutter of leaves in the wind that goes by when the night is passing? But the problem of the present engrossed us. There was the ever-recurring jar resulting from the meeting of divers nations and religions, and also the regrettable clashing of temperament even in the Christian community.

What was the remedy? We realized how small we were, how insufficient to cope with these difficulties; but we realized also the supreme refuge of the Cross. The Saviour stretches His arms wide enough to embrace the world; He receives all who differ from each other and makes them one. Out of divers gifts He forges His Church. At the Cross are solved the difficulties of all ages. Is not the Church, which from the beginning has been made to pass through much tribulation, God's provision wherewith He will succour India in time of need?

It is the aim of these impressions to call out from the past and present the influences which enrich the Church to-day.

A type of each has been chosen as representative: Sita, the ideal of the Hindu; Nur Jahan, of the Moslem. As the Christian woman inherits characteristics of both, God can use these gifts in her to make her meet for His use in a signal way. The Pandita Ramabai leads this goodly fellowship of Christian women in India. The names of a few only

can be mentioned, the Book of Life alone can contain all.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the friends who have helped me to collect and arrange these impressions in book form : to Miss K. M. Bose, to whom its initiation is due ; to Miss Lacey for her translation of the Tales of the Marionettes ; and to the authors whose books have revived and corrected a far-away vision.

There are other factors which elude acknowledgment, for on counting up the names of those to whom a deep debt is due, there still remains a region of helpful circumstances too indefinite to describe. One wonders at the last if anything is left to which an author can lay claim.

The world may say to the least, even as the Church may say to the greatest of her children :
“ *What hast thou that thou didst not receive ?* ”

LIST OF BOOKS FROM WHICH NOTES HAVE BEEN TAKEN

HINDUISM

- "Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India." JOHN CAMP-
BELL OMAN
- "The Hindus as They are." S. C. BOSE
- "Hindu Castes and Sects." J. N. BHATTACKARYA (Jogen-
dia Nath Chatterkaryya)
- "The Hindu at Home." J. E. PADFIELD
- "From Siva to Christ." S. ARUMUGAM
- "An Indian Priestess." ADA LEIGH
- "Life of Father Goreh." R. M. BENSON
- "Pandita Ramabai." HELEN S. DYER
- "The High Caste Woman." PANDITA RAMABAI
- "The Renaissance in India." C. F. ANDREWS
- "The Desire of India." S. K. DATTA
- "The Religions of the World." J. L. BARTON
- "The Great Religions of India." J. MURRAY MITCHELL

MOHAMMEDANISM

- "Autobiography of Dr. Imad-ud-din "
- "The Mystics of Islam." R. A. NICHOLSON
- "A Moslem Seeker after God." S. M. ZWEMER
- "Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and
Constitutional Theology." D. B. MACDONALD
- "Notes on Mohammedanism." T. P. HUGHES

GENERAL SUBJECTS

- "In the Desert." L. MARCH PHILLIPS
- "Form and Color." L. MARCH PHILLIPS
- "The New Jerusalem." G. K. CHESTERTON
- "Toru Dutt." HARESHA DAS
- "Nur Jahan." SIRDAR JOGENDRA SINGH
- "Lahore, its History and Antiquities." MUHAMMED
LATIF-SAIYID KHAN BAHADAR
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- "The Secret Rose." W. B. YEATS

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SECTION I

THE INDIAN WOMAN

THE INDIAN CHILD'S MOTHER

CHAPTER I

THE INDIAN WOMAN

HER SUPERSTITIONS, MYTHOLOGY, AND LEGENDS—TALES THAT
ARE TOLD BY NIGHT

“Imagination rules the world.”—*Napoleon I*

WHEN writing of the Indian woman, one thinks of her as the type of her country. Is she not so in the strictest sense? To the Indian, his country is Mother Earth, not fatherland. The woman, the mother, is the human aspect of it. Her elementary qualities, her grand simplicity of outlook, proclaim her to be the child of nature. Although debarred as yet from outward share in the affairs of the world and political questions, she is the influence behind from which outward action springs; it is from home life that politics take shape. A man is inspired as well as handicapped by the bias of home influence. Thus, in so far as the Indian woman is the spirit of outward form and action, in telling her story we are writing the history of India.

It is necessary therefore to consider the subject of

India in a broad way before beginning a detailed account of the woman's side of the question. A general survey can be gained at a glance. The religions of India, its manners and customs, are more or less revealed in the daily life of home, and of them a few notes will suffice, but there are other things which require explanation before they can be alluded to in a story.

For instance, it is well to dip into the subject of legends, folk tales, and superstitions before meeting the influence they exert upon home life. Of these, superstitions are more necessary to a right understanding of temperament than is even the knowledge of religion and customs. They form a difficult subject for study, because they belong to the sphere of perception rather than of intellect ; but without this perception there can be no sympathetic understanding of the difficulties of an Indian home. We must approach the subject with sympathy, for those who seek to explore the underworld of eastern thought are as travellers in an unknown country, and we must approach it as eastern travellers do, on foot. Slowly, and through waste places, the pilgrim reaches the village street ; voices and visions, as well as memories of the weird beings of the wilderness, will remain with him even as he knocks at the door. If in this manner we stand at the door and knock, we shall find that the shadows of what we have seen have not only followed but have overtaken us. We shall meet them again, it may be, even in the welcoming smile. For they have come to stay. They are the inmates of every eastern home. Some indeed are harmless, whimsical, but for the most part they are sinister, darkening its pleasures and deepening its gloom.

The journey does not end with the wilderness, for the outer world of religion and life has large tracts of undiscovered country. We are travellers still, and must observe the same consideration on the highways and through the streets of the city as in the village home.

Strange customs and religious ceremonies will confront us at every turn. But let us remember that India is the mother of religions as well as the mother of diverse people and tongues, and that it is to her spiritual genius that we can trace her hope as well as her despair. Sinking with the centuries deeper and deeper into superstition, idolatry, and sin, yet her desire for truth has never failed ; she seeks it still. As wayfarers pass one another on the road, they say : " Peace be with you," or " God is true." India salutes us thus ; what have we to say in return ? Have we peace to give ? A message from God to deliver ?

.

Through the dim region of her superstitions, then, we seek the face of the Indian woman. But what a maze ! Can stranger folk find the way without help ?

Out of the mist appears some one, lamp in hand. The light reveals a shrunken figure, a shrewd face. Out of the past comes a friend. It is Rahim Bibi, for who else would dare to traverse the ways of fear ! It is one of the incongruities of the heart of fear that a woman of courage should be its best interpreter. Rahim is responsible for most of the small stories of evil eye and talismans, as well as for those of another order relating to kings, soothsayers, and hidden treasure. With a fine impartiality she would discourse upon Brahman pandits as well as of her own *pirs* and

fakirs. It was only when she referred to the heroes Suhrab and Rustam, or told of Balkh and Bokhara that one recognized her as a daughter of Islam. Her stories were borrowed from the Hindu Bikarmajit as well as from the Arabic Alif Laila. Possibly their magnificence attracted her. It is a pleasing variety to one who spends her days in saving farthings at a time to tell of kingly gifts of sacks of gold and rubies, so heavy that a horse must be borrowed to carry them away. All this by the way—a case in point of how the Moslem was influenced by the faith and customs of the nations he conquered.

Yet, while calmly appropriating the wealth, together with the Hindu priests, Rahim continued to give them her own point of view. Such is the grit of the Moslem. After relating the story called "The Apple of Immortality," where the king on finding that he had given his heart away for naught left his throne to sit henceforth on dust and ashes, there was no comment of admiration. It left her cold. She implied that it was a futile proceeding. There she showed her practical turn of mind. Rahim would not have appreciated Sita's sacrifice. To gain and not to lose was her motto. Nur Jahan's genius for success would have been her ideal.

The tales that are told come from an old manuscript, solidly bound in book form. The learned one of the village reads, relates, and by long usage commits it to memory. The verbal message handed down through the ages takes on a local colour, and, as we have seen, is used by Hindu and Moslem alike. Of course this refers to folk stories, not to religious legends, which are confined to the followers of their respective creeds.

This is not a chapter on folk lore. It is merely

a few jottings about queer things. The things are usually in a tangle, but some detach themselves and become personalities, so to speak, for they enter into and affect daily life in a way that perplexes the onlooker.

THE EVIL EYE—THE HEART OF FEAR—"IT"
AND OTHERS—OMENS

To begin with, there is the Evil Eye. Who or what it is no one knows. "If you call a difficulty by a name it disappears." No one has named this, so it remains. It was born, no doubt, in the days of animism. In those primitive times man, becoming conscious that he possessed a soul, attributed a similar spirit to everything—animals, trees, rocks, springs, weapons, and heavenly bodies. These spirits might be weak or powerful, helpful or hurtful; they lived in dark and solitary places, were present in gales, floods, and whirlwinds. They were everywhere, so man had nowhere to escape. He had to live among them.* He had to walk warily for they watched him, and he had to propitiate them for they were always jealous of his good fortune.

The Evil Eye, then, may be supposed to be the manifestation of the spirit of jealousy. It may work in the heart of a neighbour or visitor, or in the glance of the traveller one meets on the road. A visitor must not remark upon the beauty of a baby, or she may be suspected of having the Evil Eye. It may be present without manifestation. But it is always there. Being indefinite as to time or place or form it cannot be met like an enemy in the open: it must be propitiated, or rather, it must be outwitted or deceived. A mistake must be added to a perfect piece of embroidery, otherwise the Evil Eye would surely harm it. A little

boy is sometimes disguised as a girl for safety, for the "thing" will pass a girl by as not worthy of injury. A newly-built house might tempt the creature either to deface it or to take possession, so it must be circumvented somehow. This is the usual method : a round, flat-bottomed earthenware pot is plastered with mud and marked with rudimentary features, a piece of wood painted red like a tongue hangs out of the mouth. This most successfully represents the human countenance in an aspect of phenomenal ugliness. The fearsome head is hung out of one of the windows. When the Evil Eye comes along it concludes that the house is inhabited by people who have already received sufficient punishment, so it departs.

Some of the talismans most commonly used against harm, or sickness, or the Evil Eye are : a verse of the Koran ; the Sikh prayer book, written small and encased in gold or silver, or sewn into a leather packet ; a tiger's claw or tooth, set in silver and worn round the neck ; an old shoe tied to the halter of a cow. The talisman of jade, inscribed with Arabic lettering and worn by Moslem women, is called "The Heart of Fear." This is to inform the Evil Eye that there is no room left in the heart of the wearer for the terror it has to bestow. Pages might be filled with a list of charms, and a most interesting list it is.

Call a difficulty by a name and it disappears : the exception to this is the serpent. If you utter the word "snake" after dark it will appear, as if in answer to its name, so the minute the sun sets you must say "*it*." During the hot nights when sleep is difficult Rahim, and such as she, pour forth wondrous tales of "it" and "others," and what a remedy for sleeplessness ! Sinuous as a serpent the stories trail along without point or

rhythm or reason, luring one on to forgetfulness. One story, called "The Snake Charmer and the Twenty Pots," would last all night if listeners could keep awake, but a chapter of it is sufficient to send the most wakeful into oblivion. Let us follow it for a few minutes. We shall begin with the snake himself, or "it." He is an aged reptile of about a thousand years. One must at this point visualize his length, the blackness and hardness of his skin. He is so long that there is no room for all of him on the path at one time. This is why he coiled round the village well and folded the rest of himself into a hole near the top. As he got older, he grew longer, and being comfortable where he was he stayed on. But it was extremely inconvenient for the village folk. They simply dared not come to draw water after dark. Of course they tried every means they could think of to get rid of "it," but nothing could move him. "It" defied even the cunning of the snake charmers, until at last he was conquered by a snake charmer's wife. How did she do it? By her skill and beauty, and by the sweet smell of the flowers she wore. Now behold her! With strings of jasmine buds round her neck and head, and wearing a veil, green like the cucumber, thin as a dream, she plays on her flute. Meanwhile she places a pot from the well over the opening of the serpent's cave. "It" was so angered at first that he blew breaths of venom into the pot which became red hot. One after another the pots are said to receive the poison. By the twentieth it had all gone. "It" had no anger left; with pleasure he drew in sweet breaths of jasmine, while yard by yard he was pulled out of the well.

If any one doubts, he must ask the snake charmer. It is quite simple, you see! But as there is not always

a charmer at hand, equal in wisdom to this gifted woman, most people provide themselves with charms. Rahim used to describe the unfailing efficacy of the flesh of the snake-eating goat. A small piece dried and put into an amulet makes the wearer immune, not only from snake-bite, but from the presence of the creature itself. She spoke also of a cure effected by a wonderful stone which, when applied to snake-bite, becomes of a brilliant blue while it "eats" the poison!

Now with regard to omens; they represent the shadow of the evil about to come. But there are good omens. It is a good augury to see a blue jay on the Dasehra festival. The howling of dogs at night presages death. The number of both good and bad omens is legion. It is a bad sign to see a broomstick the wrong side up—consequently of good augury if it stand as it ought. The stars and planets influence for good and ill. No journey is undertaken, nor can a wedding take place, without consulting the stars.

Most of the above-mentioned affect Hindu and Moslem alike, but the life of the Hindu woman more especially is charged with superstition. The burden of it is intolerable, for in times of sickness a cure may be retarded, or death may be the consequence of this belief in omens, portents, lucky, and unlucky things. The fear of evil is omnipresent; it haunts her night and day, but especially at night. Like the Celt, she fears to look into the darkness "because there is always something there."

TALES THAT ARE TOLD

It is said that, during an interview, when Lord Lawrence advised Toru Dutt and her sister Aru to

read history rather than novels, they exclaimed : " But we like novels ! "

" Why ? "

Said Toru : " Because novels are true, and histories are false." The biographer adds : " True daughters of the race that prefers legend to history."

Thus the history of her land and religion comes to the Hindu girl in legend and story. She reads it, so to speak, in a series of gorgeous pictures—pageants of the fairy land of a child. To take the religious history first, there is the vision of the beautiful Sarasvati riding upon a white goose. The gallant bird is able to carry her over hill and dale, so she can go everywhere as at much the same time, farther westward, Aphrodite rode about on her swan ! Sarasvati is the wife of Brahma, and is the goddess of wisdom and music ; in one hand she carries a book, in the other a musical instrument.

Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu and the goddess of light and wealth, is clothed in purple and scarlet. She wears gleaming strings of diamonds and rubies, and holds a lotus in her hand. When riches come to a house they say that Lakshmi has come to dwell in it. If the family become poor : ah ! then she has forsaken them.

Parvati, the wife of Siva, is more remote, and less magnificent in attire. Not only is she seated on a distant peak of the Himalayas, but her mind is far away, absorbed in prayer and meditation. This attitude represents the penances she had to undergo, because she thought to attract Siva by her beauty instead of by her austerities, as commanded by the gods.

It is one of the inconsistencies of mythology that

this austere deity should have evil manifestations : as Durga she destroys demons and giants, and as Kali she is a terrific black monster woman to whom in former times human sacrifices were offered. Murderers used to visit her shrine to obtain her blessing before going forth to slay. These horrible figures are a blot upon the pages of Hindu legendary religion.

Besides the stories of religion there are others of a more secular order, but there are none in which religion does not play a part. There are some fascinating tales of "Rajah Bikarmajit the Righteous," as told by the marionettes. It is grievous that these tales have become tainted with much that is sinful ; like the throne of Bikarmajit, which sank into the dust, they have become overloaded with mud ; but many of them are gems and are worth picking out of the mire.

Rajah Bikarmajit is the King Arthur of India. The tales of his prowess and generosity form an endless series of pictures : a kinemakolor of gods and goddesses, Brahman priests, genii, talking blackbirds, dreams, and precious stones. They remind one of the "Arabian Nights." "Indian Nights" they might be called, for far past the hot midnight hours, sometimes until the cool of dawn, a circle of villagers will sit entranced around the story teller. It matters little to the hearers whether the tales are new or old, how oft repeated, or how inconsequent. The splendour of the imagery is the charm, and to the dwellers of the vast northern plains there must needs be in their romances, as in their musical method, a suggestion of infinity. There is no full stop. One tale blends into another : a tune never ends for it stops in the middle of the line—an indication to begin again.

The number of the tales is as the number of the

marionettes—thirty-two. The first few leaves of the book, including a digest of the preface and a tale from one of the marionettes, will be as much as one would care to listen to at a time.

It will be seen that through all the extravagances and absurdities of the tale there is a meaning. It gives also an insight into kingship, priestcraft, and Hindu divinities deeper sometimes than that obtained from a treatise on eastern religions and history.

RAJAH BIKARMAJIT THE RIGHTEOUS

The preface begins with a picture of the rajah Bhoj, ruler of Ujjain, of his rich country and contented people. The land was free from any disturbing influence. Even the leopard and the goat drank water together from the same stream. Signs of prosperity were seen everywhere. There was not so much as a span of waste land, and trade flourished in the cities. There were shops of all kinds, each like a horn of plenty pouring its wealth into the street. There were bankers, jewellers, goldsmiths, gold braid makers, glass founders, ironmongers. The bazaar blazed with wealth. In the shops of the jewel merchants there were boxes of pearls, sack-loads of turquoises from the Roof-of-the-World. The gardens of the city were open to all. The trees bent down to the ground with fruit, the lotus covered the ponds. The wheels of the wells never ceased pouring water into the fields. In the midst of the gardens stood the eighty-four palaces of the king. In the marble courts were fountains of rose water, around which sat musicians playing on stringed instruments. All was as the harmony of a song, for the king was wise and his nine ministers of

state were as nine flawless rubies ; but Indra the god, seeing his greatness, was filled with envy, and the court rubbed their hands in sorrow.

Now the king's gardener had made a beautiful walk between the palace garden and a cucumber field that belonged to a farmer. When the vines spread out their leaves and the yellow blossoms appeared, the field became like a saffron robe. No one enjoyed the golden scene more than the king, who used to come in the cool of the morning before beginning the affairs of state.

But in the midst of the field was a place where nothing grew—like the bald spot on the head of an ascetic. On this the farmer built a lodge. When he sat on it he spake boastful words against the king.

The soldiers repeated these words to the king. They said : “ The platform of bamboo sticks has a strange effect upon the man. When he sits there he speaks with the voice of a lion, but when he comes down he is as a cow.”

The king went to the field, listened, grew alarmed. He went home and passed a restless night. In the morning he called together his wise men and astrologers and told them what had happened. The astrologers considered the influence of the stars and place upon the farmer, and came to the conclusion that treasure was buried in the field. The pandits agreed that all the signs augured wealth.

No sooner did the king hear the opinion of the wise men than he sent for 100,000 diggers and issued an order that the place should be dug up. He sent members of his council to see that the order was carried out, and rode to the place every day to see for himself how the work prospered.

At last his effort was rewarded. One day the diggers struck against a golden spike ; after a while the four pillars of a throne appeared. " Lift it out, O ye 100,000 men ! " shouted the king.

They set to work, but the throne was immovable. Then spoke a pandit : " Sire, the great throne has been made by the gods. It cannot be moved without the offering of a sacrifice."

The king brought the sacrifice, and ordered the musicians to play on their stringed instruments and to cry : " Victory."

A change took place, the earth trembled, and the throne was lifted out, as easily as a gardener may draw the root of a henna plant out of the ground. Great was the joy with which all beheld the treasure. When cleansed from dust it shone as if made by the gods. There were eight marionettes on each of the four sides. Each held a lotus flower in her hand. They appeared so lifelike that one seemed to see them walk and to hear the sound of a voice. And how great was their beauty ! Their eyes were like those of a gazelle, in form they were like leopards. The king exclaimed : " Perhaps the gods have made the marionettes, or they may be as the fairies of Zudar. Find out, O pandits, the fortunate day on which I may sit upon the throne."

The wise men took counsel together and decided that a certain day in the month of Katak would be propitious, as all the omens for that day were good. Then the heart of the king was glad. He made great preparations, and invited all the neighbouring kings for the occasion.

The day dawned ; the city rejoiced. The pandits read from the Vedas. The musicians played on every

kind of instrument. The soldiers were given robes of honour. The throne was in the midst.

But when the king approached the throne the marionettes laughed aloud. The king was filled with anger and fear, but he did not withdraw his foot from the first step of the throne. Addressing the marionettes, he said : " Why do you laugh with scorn at a king, the son of kings ? Am I not generous, brave, and wise ? Am I not just ? Is there any one above me ? "

Then spoke Ratanmangini, the first marionette : " O king, listen to my words. You are indeed wise and good, but let not your virtues make you proud. Listen to an old story, and remember that this life has no end. God has made jewels of divers colours. In every step there is a mine of wealth ; in every mile there is a fountain of immortality. But you cannot see the future, so in reality you know nothing. You are not singular in this : there are many like you who think themselves wise, but in reality are foolish. And you, in spite of your wisdom, are not to be compared with the man on whose throne you presume to sit."

The king was wroth on hearing this, and cried out : " I will destroy the throne, and cast it away."

" Let this injustice be far from our lord, the king," said Baruch the priest, stepping forward. " Listen first to what the puppet says, and then do as seems right."

" Very well, proceed," murmured the king. " Tell me about the famous rajah."

" How can I tell all," retorted the marionette, " when on hearing but a few words you burn with indignation ? If I tell of the great doings of the rajah

you will be put to such shame that you will weep all day and your people will despise you. Perhaps it would be well not to speak of the great deeds of Bikarmajit, seeing that I shall declare them with a boldness to which you are not accustomed, for the day he departed the throne sank into the ground, and we died. We died, and now we fear no one."

The prime minister persuaded Ratanmangini to tell the tale. She consented, and at the end asked the rajah if he considered himself equal with Bikarmajit and thus worthy to mount the throne. The king, silenced and amazed, passed the night in anxious thought, but with the morning came hope and desire, so he returned to place his foot on the first step of the throne—only to be stopped by the story of the next marionette, and again plunged into despair.

THE STORY OF CHANDAKALA, THE FOURTH
MARIONETTE—THE VISIT OF THE GODDESS
LAKSHMI TO HER TEMPLE

One day a Brahman pandit came from afar to visit the king Bikarmajit.

"What is your message and request?" said the king.

"O king, you are mighty and wise, but you will be greater still if the presence will listen to a worm."

"Say on, noble pandit."

Said the Brahman: "There is no kingly memorial like a magnificent building, so if the maharajah will build a great temple his name will be remembered for ever. One thing, however, is of great importance: let not the presence forget that the work of building must be done only while the earth stands still under

the influence of the sign of Tul. The temple will then be without an equal and the Goddess of Wealth will make her abode in it."

The king issued an order to his prime minister that the building of the temple should begin at once, but with the caution that it should be stopped at the moment when the earth slid out of the shadow of Tul.

"And see to it," said the king, as the prime minister hastened to obey him, "see that the situation is worthy, for many a fine building has been spoiled by its surroundings."

"It shall be done," replied the prime minister.

The work was begun forthwith. Gold, marble, onyx, cornelian, jade, were brought from the ends of the earth. The most skilful craftsmen and builders were chosen, and the foundation was laid in the loveliest curve of the bank of the river. The temple was many years in building, but at last it stood—perfect as a cut and polished stone. It was a seven-sided figure of white marble, four gates of blue enamel opened into the shrine. When the reflections of whiteness floated in the stream, the people likened it to a lovely maid looking at herself in a mirror.

The king came to see it, bringing the Brahman pandit with him to perform the religious rites of dedication.

"Its beauty makes the dust feel young!" said the Brahman. "O that it might be mine!"

When the Ganges water had been placed within, and the rosary of tulsi beads hung up, and all rites completed, the king presented the temple to the Brahman.

The Brahman took possession at once, and retired

to rest. At the first watch of the night a glittering figure appeared.

“ I am Lakshmi,” she said. “ Shall I fall from heaven and light my house ? ”

It was a dark night, but the gleaming jewels of the goddess filled the room with light.

The Brahman was stricken with fears he could not express, nor could he shut his eyes ; he stared at the apparition until it faded away. Twelve o'clock sounded from the water clock in the court. Once more the vision appeared, and again the room was lit by the flashing of precious stones.

Bending her jewelled head towards the priest, she said : “ Most timorous one ! Why do you not speak to the goddess who has come to her temple ? ”

The Brahman trembled, not a word could he say, and as before he gazed at the bright vision until it disappeared.

“ Will morning never come ? ” said the Brahman. “ I will leave this dreadful place at dawn and never return.”

Next morning a trembling creature presented itself before Rajah Bikarmajit. The king was overwhelmed with mirth at the sight, and it was some time before he could call a voice from amidst his laughter to say : “ The joy of yesterday has gone, Brahman ; tell me how ? ”

“ My lord the king dispenses wealth and joy to all, even as the god Indra, and yesterday the presence gave a temple to this worm. It is magnificent, but *it belongs not to me—another has taken possession*. The demon, or whatever it was, tormented me during the night watches, and my liver would have dried up had not the decrees of fate ordered my appearing before

the king this day. I would lose my head rather than return, for indeed I dare not."

The generous king felt sorry for the poor creature, and at once ordered that the value of the temple should be given to the Brahman in pieces of silver. The sum was so great that the treasurer spent days in weighing it, and had to order two horses to carry the load away. When the Brahman had gone, the king considered the matter—so strange was it. And then, as he did not know what fear was, he resolved to go and find out for himself. Choosing an auspicious time, as directed by the astrologers, he went to the temple, and sitting down in the white cloisters he became lost in meditation.

At sunset, when the white walls glowed like a cornelian, the goddess Lakshmi floated in and, kneeling before the king, said: "Blessed one of courage!"

The king was not afraid; he was calm and still as the lotus at midday. At the first watch of the night, Lakshmi appeared again. The light of her presence fell on her necklace of garnet beads as the sunlight on falsa berries that are wet with rain. The room was as on a milk-white night of the moon. Going up to Bikarmajit, she said: "Command me! Tell me, O king, where I, the Light, may fall in my temple—and beyond?"

"Where it pleases the Lady of Light," said Bikarmajit.

The Goddess of Light disappeared in a shower of gold. The king looked around him with amazement. Gold was falling in showers, in the courts amidst the trees, over the city. The ground was covered with shining, beautiful gold mohurs.

"This is good!" exclaimed the king, after he had watched the golden rain for a while. "My people will now have rest from toil. They can pick up gold instead of working for silver."

Presently the prime minister appeared, breathless with wonder and excitement: "The clouds are pouring down gold instead of water, O king! What are your majesty's commands concerning this thing?"

"My people are my first care," said the king. "Cause a drum to be beaten in the bazaar and issue a proclamation that every one is to gather as much as he can hold, and that none prevent him."

The people filled their houses with gold.

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The marionette, having finished her story, turned to the king and said: "What think you now, Rajah Bhoj? A hare is not equal to a lion, nor is a crow to a swan. A necklace of pearls fits not a monkey's throat, nor is a gold-embroidered saddle cloth becoming to an ass. You aspire to the throne of one with whom you are not an equal. In trying to reach the star you will perish in the dust."

The king received the words with humility, but next morning his pride revived, and he resolved to try again. He tries every morning—but every evening he goes away ashamed, and so on, until the terrific chastening of the thirty-two tongues of the marionettes comes to an end. Does it end? The last pages of the book are lost—so who can say? It may be going on still!

CHAPTER II

SITA

THE story of Sita cannot be written as a thing apart : it is for ever enclosed in the life of her husband.

The greeting " Ram, Ram " is alternated with that of " Sita, Ram," as if on receiving the greeting of the blessing of Rama the other in return would double it, so to speak, by adding that of Sita. They were lovely and pleasant in their lives ; in death they are not divided.

Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu looms large in the eye of India. In Northern India he is perhaps the most popular incarnation. His birth, as befits a demi-god, was miraculous. Dasaratha, king of Oudh, had no son, so he took counsel of the Brahmans and soothsayers. According to their advice, he sacrificed a horse in honour of Vishnu. The sacrifice was accepted, and Vishnu granted him four sons, who should be accounted sons of the gods.

Their names were : Rama, Lakshman, Satrugna, and Bharat. Rama was of the first rank among the four incarnations.

A great affection existed between the four brothers, but Rama and Lakshman were as one soul. They hunted together, they travelled always together, they

shared their honours and their joys, and when sorrow came they shared it also. They appear together in the story of the Ramayana.

Now there was a king in Tirhut called Janaka, who possessed two wonderful things—a daughter called Sita, whom none could equal in beauty, and a magic bow that no one had been able to bend.

Many a prince came to ask for the hand of the princess, but the king's reply was always the same: "He alone who can bend the bow shall marry the Princess Sita."

Hitherto no one had been able to bend the bow. Hearing of this, Rama, followed by Lakshman, rode away to the palace of King Janaka, and presented himself for the contest. The bow was brought, and he drew the string with such force that the bow snapped in two.

The condition fulfilled, Rama became the accepted suitor of the Princess Sita. A messenger was sent to invite his father to the wedding. In due course King Dasaratha arrived, accompanied by his other sons and a large retinue. Then followed a wedding of great magnificence. Rama was married to Sita, and his three brothers to three other daughters of King Janaka.

They all returned to the palace in Oudh and lived in happiness. After a while King Dasaratha, following the instruction of the lawgiver Manu, wished to abdicate in favour of Rama, and desired his son to keep a vigil in preparation. The people who loved Rama were delighted. The city was illuminated as during the Feast of Lanterns in honour of Lakshmi.

But Kakaya, the mother of Bharat, was sore displeased. She retired to her room, and refused to eat.

The kind-hearted rajah visited her and tried to comfort her, but in vain, so, as the foolish ones do, he promised to grant all her desire. Then said the queen : " Send Prince Rama to live in the jungle for fourteen years, and let Bharat be appointed prince regent."

The rajah was filled with grief and the city with lamentation, but, as the promise of a king could not be broken, Rama had to be sent into banishment.

Now comes the beautiful part of the story. Rama tried to persuade Sita to allow him to go into the forest alone, but she refused to listen. He spoke of difficulty and danger, the darkness, the thorns that would pierce her feet. But she said :

A woman's bliss is found not in the smile
Of father, mother, friend, nor in herself ;
Her husband is her only portion here—
Her heaven hereafter.

" If indeed thou must go, my lord, then so be it ; but I shall go first and pluck the thorns from the branch that would wound thee."

Still trying to dissuade her, Rama told her of difficulties greater than she had imagined, and of the final danger. " But what of that ? Death is better than separation," she said. Scorning it all, she defied fate ; so they departed into the forest with Lakshman, who prayed to be allowed to go too.

The old king died of grief, and Bharat went to the exiles entreating them to come back. But Rama declared that he must fulfil his father's commands. Bharat nevertheless regarded Rama as the rightful heir, and on occasions of state caused Rama's shoes to be exposed to view to show publicly that he was king.

Time would fail to tell of the wonderful deeds, or to follow the intricacies of the story, of the exiled prince

and princess. It hinges, however, on the war waged by Rama against the fierce giant—king of Ceylon. This warfare is the subject of the great epic poem called the “*Ramayana*.”

Rawan, the giant, was an opponent worthy of Rama. He is described as being an enormous creature, great as a mountain, with ten heads and twenty arms. He could darken the sun, still the winds, and prevent fire from giving out heat. He took delight in oppressing gods, fairies, Brahmans, and good people. His followers were called *rakhshas*, or demons.

One day Rawan's sister found Rama and Sita sitting under a tree. Desiring to become the queen of Oudh, she proposed to eat up Sita and Lakshman as a preliminary measure. A fight ensued, and Lakshman cut off her nose and ears. So she fled to her brother and told her tale of woe. He sought to avenge her in the way which would most hurt Rama, and decided that the greatest injury he could inflict would be to carry off Sita. He seized the opportunity when Sita was alone, and took her away to his palace in Ceylon. There he offered her his throne and his giant heart. She refused, so was cast into prison.

Rama, distracted with grief, wandered through the jungle calling upon the trees and hills to tell him what had become of his beloved. At last he saw a dying vulture, who related the whole story of what had happened. Then another friend in need appeared—Hanuman, the king of the monkeys, offered his services. He joined Rama, and with his host of monkeys formed a rope which bridged the sea so that Rama and his army might pass over. After a great battle, Rama slew Rawan, and Sita was released. The gods blessed him for the deliverance afforded by removing the

scourge of the earth and the heavens. They lent a magic car in which Rama, Sita, and Lakshman flew to their home in one day. Great was the rejoicing in the city, and joyful the welcome of the faithful Bharat. Rama was then declared King of Oudh.

Why does not the story end here?

After the triumphal entry, begins the tragedy which is the theme of the drama called "*Uttra Ram Chairta*" (later adventures of Rama). The people of the city demanded the banishment of Sita, and the king obeyed them. During her banishment Rama had a golden image made of Sita, so that on religious ceremonies where a wife is included he could carry her presence with him.

A *rishi*, called Valmiki, cared for Sita and her two little sons. One day he brought the children to the court. Rama received them, but when asked to include Sita he demanded that she should undergo a second ordeal in the presence of the priests and nobles of the kingdom. Sita at once consented, but on appearing before the king and his court said she would do nothing for re-instatement as queen. "I am my lord's wife, that suffices," she said, and turning towards the earth she begged her as a mother to receive her—to give her the last resting-place of the pure in heart.

The story of the Ramayana ends by Sita sinking into the ground, while the gods throw down flowers from heaven.

How disappointing, and how inconsistent! Why did Rama fail Sita in her hour of trial? Again one wonders "Why?"

But the Hindu woman does not ask why. She finds no fault in him, even as Sita who loved and obeyed

him to the end. Is not this the clue to her devotion ? That capacity for a love which clings to the beloved in spite of all. It is strong as death—until death—and beyond ; it is the spirit that enabled a wife to enter the fire with her dead husband.

No, the Hindu woman finds no fault either with Rama's inconsistency or with Sita's obedience to a senseless command. To this day she will give as her benediction to a young girl : " May you have a husband like Rama."

The story of Rama and Sita colours the imagination of India. All the beautiful things of heaven above and of the earth beneath are used wherewith to liken them : as the stars they shine, as the breath of acacia buds lingers their memory. " Like the lotus his eyes and heart." " Her hands, red with henna, shine like rubies." In the eighth marriage blessing, the priests and those present chant :

The pearls in the lotus-like hands of Sita,
Which shone like rubies,
When poured on the head of Rama
Appeared white like jasmine flowers.

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May those pearls, thus used at the marriage of Rama and Sita, give happiness unto you.

When the rite of marriage is completed, and other guests leave, the women, with lamps in their hands, sing songs taken from the marriage songs of Rama and Sita. The Lamp Song to Rama is charming of its kind.

So the love of the people continued to flow out to them through the centuries, until in process of time they became deified. Some worship Rama alone, but most pay equal homage to Sita. There are many parts of India where the Ramayana is the holy book

of the people, and it is the passages about the devotion of Sita rather than those upon the valour of Rama that they love best.

An ascetic may be heard at a mela praying : " Sita, Ram ! Sita, Ram ! "

As a funeral party wends its way the *acharjan* calls at short intervals : " Ram, say Ram." The bearers of the dead answer : " Ram ! brother ! Ram ! "

Invoked at marriage and at death : there is a delightful sympathy in it all, owing doubtless to the fact that Rama and Sita were real people like those who love them. It is the worship of God in human form.

It is said that when the god Rama visited his people in Oudh, before speaking of anything else, he would ask them how the crops were growing. If they were good, he would then in his own gay fashion explain to them his plans for government. When a woman visits a certain shrine in Benares she is shown the cooking utensils of Sita. No doubt about it ! These are just what she used to prepare her lord's meal—she, the beautiful queen and gracious goddess, who understands what a plain woman has to do !

Sita is regarded as the beloved of Rama, the cause of happiness, the dispeller of sorrow, a jewel among faithful wives, and a refuge of the distressed. It is not her beauty and queenhood so much as her devotion and sorrow that have captivated the heart of the women of India. She is not only their inspiration, but their sympathizer and their friend.

CHAPTER III

HINDUISM

WHEN the Aryans crossed the Himalayan passes and descended into the plains of India they brought with them a simple faith founded on the teaching of Vedantism. There are to be found in some portions of this system, profound thought and deep spiritual desire. Those among the Hindus who study the earlier Vedic writings, while rejecting the rest, find in them great beauty and helpful teaching. Father Goreh told his daughter, some years before his death, about his early religious experience. "My father had me very carefully instructed in the *shastras*, that is, the philosophical writings of the Hindus, and I grew up to love them with a great spiritual delight. They were the joy of my life."

At first the Aryan worship was simple as its faith. There were no temples and but few rites. There were prayer and praise. But ceremonial increased, and prayer became a spell. Then followed the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul by successive births into every conceivable form of things in air or earth or sea, until it finds itself to be one with God. Consequently everything has become an object of worship. Shrines and temples are innumerable, but there is

none dedicated to the supreme divine Being because He is believed to be present in everything. Pilgrimage became a part of religion, and is now one of its important features. With the growth of superstition came the tyranny of the Brahmanical priesthood, the iniquity of the caste system, and the degradation of women.

Caste is the distinctive mark of Hinduism. There are many castes, the highest being the Brahman, supposed to be holy ; the outcaste is regarded as polluted. These outcastes belonged to the original inhabitants of India, and the conquerors, in order to keep them as slaves, caused them to be outcasted.

Hinduism cannot be spoken of as one faith. It is a mixture of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and devil-worship, for it has ever been the method of Brahmanism to absorb rather than to oppose old religions. It is therefore a congeries of mutually inconsistent beliefs and practices. From a simple source it has become one of the most complex systems of religion ; from a small beginning it has become vast, indefinable ; it has filled the land. It claims two-thirds of the population of India, and yet it has no personality, so to speak. Other religions, including the reformed sects and modern movements, owe their existence to a leader. Hinduism owns no founder ; it is the outcome of race, climate, country ; it is the growth of a great land. It is multiform, and composed of inherently antagonistic beliefs, yet by the growth of mysticism it is pervaded by an influence, which includes all phases of thought, all sects and castes and religions, and in a sense unifies them ; and the religious mystic, mendicant, or ascetic is revered as such, whether Hindu or Moslem. To avoid repetition, the following short account will include both.

THE INDIAN WOMAN IN CONNEXION WITH
RELIGIOUS MENDICANCY, YOGISM, MYSTICISM,
AND ASCETICISM IN INDIA

I must launch my boat. . . .

What emptiness do you gaze upon !

Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the notes of a
far-away song floating from the shore ?

I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and
when they ask me, what is it I want, I drop my eyes and answer
them not.—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

Mystics and ascetics are to be found all over the world, but their home is in India. Their names are written on the first pages of her history. We find among them the names of her daughters as well as of her sons, from all sects of her religion. This may seem a paradox, but then, as some one has said, we get "inured to paradox in India." But the question remains : Why is such a multitude driven out into the wilderness ?

Apart from deeper reasons, there is a national tendency to movement, because India is a sorrowful land. She has suffered all down the ages. Invasions, flood, earthquake, famine, and pestilence have filled her cup with desolation time after time. So, adorable as she is, India is a hard mother to all but the rich among her children. Beset by poverty, uncertainty, and the fear of evil, the mass of the people cling to religion, and from among them there is a constant stream of weary souls fleeing from the difficulties of life. There is also the example of the gods and demi-gods, and there is the law of Manu which exhorts a man to spend his closing years alone in meditation

while living on the charity of others. But there are above all, the Hindu doctrine of the antagonism of spirit and matter, and also Mohammedan fatalism, sense of sin, and fear of judgment and hell fire. It is the former which has produced yogism, and the latter which has inspired the Moslem mystic and ascetic. The word "yoga" means union. Yogism deals with the relations of the soul, the body, and the Great Spirit—God. The soul is attracted to the body, but its true partner is the Great Spirit. The soul of man is likened to a woman whose king and husband is God. This thought runs through the *Gitanjali* of Rabindranath Tagore : see the beautiful picture of the beggar maid and the king. The object of yogism is to detach the soul from the body and to reunite her to Brahma. Two means are used. The first is to reason out the subject intellectually ; the other is by absorption and apathy. The mystic union is said to be possible even in this life. The yogi who has attained it is supposed to be set free even in his living body from its limitations. He is said to be able to fly, and to raise the dead. He plays a great part in the legendary lore of India.

In other cults this belief that the body alone is the cause of separation from God leads to self-torture. But beyond the extravagances of all the differing shades of belief there is a far-away gleam of the love of God. Otherwise how can one account for : " The veil on the face of my beloved is the dust of my body. Blessed be the moment when I shall lift the veil " ?

In the poetry of the Moslem mystic, we might seem to go a step farther towards the heavenly vision. " I fancied that I loved Him, but on consideration, I saw that His love preceded mine." " Thy calling . . .

was but : ' Here am I. ' ” In both cases, although in divers ways, the Hindu seeker and the Moslem mystic found that love is the magnet which draws the soul to God.

In all creeds there have been women as well as men in the quest. They endure equal hardness, share the same privileges, and, when they have " attained," are paid equal homage. The general term for a Hindu devotee is *sadhu*, that for the Moslem is *fakir*. When a man or a woman leaves home to become a sadhu or fakir, ordinary clothing and jewels are laid aside for the saffron-coloured robe or blanket, or other garment, according to the sect followed. This colour is at once a sign and a protection. The pilgrim clad in yellow, carrying rosary and alms bowl, is received everywhere, and is given food and lodging when required.

These religious wanderers are revered by the multitude and feared also, for they are supposed to possess supernatural powers for good or ill. The whole land of India is their field. They travel by mountain and through forest, from village to village, through the towns, and by all the sacred shrines, so they learn much of the ways of man and bird and beast.

Apart from the main differences between Hindu and Moslem, there are in each religion an endless number of sects ; of the sadhus alone there are various subdivisions. Each persuasion dresses after its manner : some in cotton cloth and others in a rough blanket ; some do not dress at all, they clothe themselves in dust and ashes. The rosary varies according to the sect of the wearer. It may be of basil wood beads or of rough rudraksha berries : the number of beads is according to belief. The Sivaite rosary has thirty-two or

sixty-four rudrakhsha berries ; the Vishnite, 108 beads of the holy tulsi. The Moslem rosary has ninety-nine beads.

Their religious practices vary with the creed. One class lapses into silence and meditation, another preaches on opportunity ; some undergo severe discipline and bodily torture. As far as one can know, they all live upon the charity of others, either by begging from door to door or by placidly waiting at a shrine until some one comes to feed them.

But of whatever order, the religious pilgrim is unmistakable. He of the saffron robe is the most familiar figure. Wherever one goes there is that flash of colour in the sunshine, like a flame of fire ; the whining voice at a door, wallet or bowl extended for alms. He may carry a musical instrument made from a gourd or of wood. Æsthetically, the colour and sound are of a perfection of fitness with the sky, the banyan tree, the carved doorway, or the mud wall ; but when one thinks of moral values a feeling of hostility arises.

This strong, well-favoured man ought to be at work, instead of living upon others. He demands from all, even from the poor. The door has opened, and a thin shrivelled hand gives the dole. He receives it with indifference, his wallet is half filled even by now, and the sun is but a cow's halter length up the sky. Incidentally, this multitude of unemployed, numbering about six millions, is a drain upon the strength of the land. The poverty of India is increased by religious idleness more than by anything else. The religious mendicant is for the most part just a lazy creature who will not work. His hypocrisy has become proverbial. There are, moreover, worse things than that. A heavy

indictment of brutality and immorality can be laid to the charge of many who wear the monk's habit. But nothing can shake the pathetic faith of the people in the sanctity of religious orders.

Some one asked a pandit about the true seekers after God. At first he seemed doubtful as to their existence, and then reluctantly conceded that there might be one in a thousand. It is to these notables among the thousands that India may look for spiritual uplift. There are many of blameless life who are truly seeking after God. There are some who, having found Him, still traverse the lonely road, seeking with the great Seeker of Souls for those who are lost.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOMAN'S PLACE IN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

THE danger of dealing with a vast subject in sketches and notes is that one point of view may become exaggerated. A few verses from the hymns and teaching of the early Aryan period might easily captivate the reader by the sheer beauty and tenderness of their imagery. So let it be remembered that it is not with the beauty of the early philosophy that we have to do, but with the practical results upon the life of the people of Hindu ethics, especially those of a later date.

We must deal with the burdens imposed by the Brahmans upon the castes beneath them ; burdens too heavy to be borne, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers. The heaviest burden was put upon the weakest. It is the woman, the most ardent worshipper, who suffers most from her religion. This is not an inference drawn by a western reformer unversed in Sanskrit.

The following notes are taken from a book written by a Sanskrit scholar, the Pandita Ramabai : being one of India's women, she speaks of what she knows. After describing the high place accorded to women

in the Aryan period, the Pandita gives the reverse of the shield. This is studied best from the laws of Manu, for all Hindus, with few exceptions, believe implicitly what the lawgiver says about women :—

“ For women no sacramental rite is performed in the sacred text ; women who are destitute of strength and destitute of knowledge of Vedic texts are impure as falsehood itself.” Such is Manu’s opinion of the majority of women—as “ impure as falsehood itself.” Then follow texts about women which refer to the expiation of their sins.

Such distrust and low estimate of woman’s nature and character are at the root of the seclusion of women in India, which existed from about the sixth century B.C., and has become greatly increased and far more tyrannical since the Mohammedan invasion. All male relatives are commanded to deprive a woman of her freedom : “ Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males of their family ” ; “ A woman is never fit for independence ” (Manu ix. 2, 3) ; “ Even weak husbands must guard their wives ; as it cannot always be done by force, the husband is exhorted to keep his wife employed in religious duties.” Manu has done his best to degrade woman in the eyes of the world. “ I can say truthfully,” says the Pandita, “ that I have never read any sacred book in Sanskrit literature without meeting this kind of hateful sentiment about women.”

Profane literature is not less severe or more respectful about women, as may be judged from the ethical part of a catechism, and a few proverbs :—

Q. : What is cruel ?

A. : The heart of a viper.

Q. : What is more cruel than that ?

A. : The heart of a woman.

Q. : What is the cruellest of all ?

A. : The heart of a sonless, penniless woman.

From a catechism on moral subjects by a Hindu of high literary reputation :—

Q. : What is the chief gate of hell ?

A. : A woman.

Q. : What is that which cannot be trusted ?

A. : Woman.

“Never put your trust in woman.” “Women’s counsel leads to destruction.” “Woman is a great whirlpool of suspicion, a dwelling-place of vices, full of deceit, a hindrance in the way of heaven, the gates of hell.”

“Hear the duties of a woman,” says Manu ; “by a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own home. She must always be cheerful, clever in the management of her household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, economical in expenditure. Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother with the father’s permission, she shall obey as long as he lives, and when he dies, she must not insult his memory. Though destitute of virtue . . . or destitute of good qualities, yet a husband must constantly be worshipped by a faithful wife. No sacrifice, no vow, no fast, must be performed by women apart from their husbands ; if a wife obeys her husband, she will, for that reason alone, be exalted in heaven. A faithful wife who desires to dwell after death with her husband, must never do anything to displease him who took her hand, whether he be alive or dead ” (Manu v. 147-156).

“By violating her duty towards her husband, a wife, after death, enters a jackal.”

A husband may cast away his wife if he desires. Not so a wife her husband ; she must revere him as a god even if destitute of virtue, and continue to do so, for even death does not free her from the law of her husband. As a widow her bonds are drawn closer still. Throughout India widowhood is regarded as the punishment of a horrible crime or crimes committed by the woman in a former existence upon earth. If a mother of sons, she is not so pitiable, but is nevertheless looked upon as a sinner ; an aged widow involuntarily commands respect.

In ancient times, long before the Code of Manu, and when the priesthood had not mutilated the original reading of the Vedic text concerning widows, a custom of re-marriage was in existence. The self-immolation of widows (*sati*) on the deceased husband's pyre was an invention by the priesthood after the Code of Manu was compiled. A text in the Rig-veda was corrupted in order to secure their purpose. The act was supposed to be voluntary, and no doubt it was so in many cases. Some died because of the love stronger than death which they bore to their husbands ; some because they were unhappy ; some from ambition in order that their names might be inserted in the long list of family gods. Tombstones and monuments were erected to those who thus died. If at the last moment they quailed at the sight of the fire and repented, priests and other men were at hand to force them down, because a vow was not allowed to be broken. In 1829, the law prohibiting *sati* was enacted, but it was not till 1844 that it had any effect upon the orthodox Hindu mind. According to popular belief there is

no other heaven for a woman than that which she shares with her husband if she be faithful in thought, word, and deed. The only place where she can get rid of him is in hell. With the growth of reformed sects have come the re-marriage of widows, the education of women, and the amelioration of their condition. But this dawn of better things has as yet touched the higher slope only. There remains the dense jungle of Hinduism into which the light has not yet penetrated. There are millions of India's daughters who, at the best, are leading twilight lives, at the worst bearing the heavy burden of unjust laws.

CHAPTER V

HER HOME AND RELIGION

Patience is vaster and greater than an ocean ;
Do naught to others which if done to thee
Would cause thee pain, this is the sum of duty ;
Enjoy thou the prosperity of others,
Although thyself unprosperous. Noble men
Take pleasure in their neighbour's happiness.

Bear railing words with patience, never meet
An angry man with anger, nor return
Reviling for reviling ; smite not him
Who smiteth thee, let thy speech and acts be gentle.

—*Epic of the Maha-Bharata*

IT is impossible for western nations to realize what it means to belong to a country which has an unbroken record since earth's earliest ages. Invasions and changes of government are but episodes which, although leaving their mark and still exercising an influence, have left the bulk of the people—the masses of the villages—just as they were. They ply the same crafts, and lead the same lives as they have done for centuries. There is, of course, an element of change, and to-day its rate of progress is not only accelerating daily—it is enlarging its area of influence ; but that belongs to another chapter.

The spirit of the past still dwells among the masses of the illiterate. This class forms as yet the majority of the people. The people have become a part of the

land ; one might almost say that the land is their religion. They have idealized it, worshipped every stock and stone of it, until mentally they are inseparable from it. The brooding mind of India listens, absorbs, meditates. The silence is alive with voices. The Hindu religion in its countless forms and manifestations has grown from the soil, as it were. It flourishes in every river and mountain and tree ; without these forms, or banished to another country, it must die ; without them the woman, in so far as she is a Hindu woman, must die also. For her home and her religion are one. From birth to death, worship, work, rites, and ceremonies are inextricably woven together. They form a texture which clothes her and ultimately becomes herself.

In attempting to give a glimpse of the life in the Hindu home in one picture it is necessary to draw it with light touches. To deal even with the surface with anything like accuracy would require many pictures, each devoted to a separate caste, taken from different angles. Customs vary according to caste and geographical position, so the sketch must be of an average home and of ordinary women.

In a literal sense the life of the Hindu woman is the inner life ; the home is the heart of the house into which no stranger enters. The outer rooms, where business is transacted and where callers are received, belong to the men's part of the building. The inner courts, presided over by the house mother, are sacred to home life, cooking, and worship. The head of the house is the husband ; but his wife is the head of the home. Her married sons with their wives live in the house according to patriarchal plan, so her power, influence, and responsibilities are great. The head of a house

has, of course, the greater honour and position—nothing can be done without his permission—but the happiness or misery of the home depends upon the house mother. To her belong the food arrangements and hospitality, and, incidentally, the ruling of her daughters-in-law. If she be a person of kindness and tact, the womenfolk have no cause to be unhappy ; but as men are not always wise, neither are women always of a kind heart. But they are always capable, always expert cooks as well as economical managers. There is no such thing as a thriftless house mother, and this is well, because the laws of hospitality are exacting and rigidly enforced.

“ Do good to-day, time passes, death is near ; even to foes who visit us as guests due hospitality should be displayed. The tree screens with its leaves the man who fells it.” (*Epic of the Maha-Bharata.*)

But above all things the Hindu woman is a devoted mother. Even when she becomes the head of the home and consequently mother-in-law, she never fails in love to her children. Truth compels me to add “ especially to her own children,” for the daughters-in-law usually tell another story. But then she has always to suffer comparison with the dear indulgent mother from whom the child-wife was parted—with what anguish of soul ! So it must be as a mother, pure and simple, without complications of in-law-hood that we must regard her.

And what a mother !—so patient, humble, a sacrifice to home love, like her ideal Sita. The daily round is all she asks for ; it satisfies her heart. At dawn she awakes with an invocation to the tutelary god, or the supreme Spirit. She then bathes, and sees to the ways of her household. Bathing is a wide term, but it is always an act of religion. If the home is near

enough to allow of a bath in Mother Ganges, that is a rite indeed, but there is usually a sacred tank near by, and there is always the water of the well. Preferably there should be a well in one's own courtyard, for excepting Ganges water, which may be kept bottled up for sprinkling purposes, a Hindu should bathe in freshly drawn water. Besides, it is pleasanter ! Water drawn overnight is considered stale, but fresh water is cool in summer and warm in winter. After the bath comes the cooking—another occasion for religious observance.

The fireplace is marked off as sacred, no one of another caste may come near it or touch any of the vessels, her shadow even must not fall on the food. No forbidden food must be cooked ; beef heads the tabooed list in the animal kingdom, but not all vegetables are permissible. One at least is outside the pale because a goddess was reincarnated in its form. The simple meal is beset with religious prohibitions, for to the Hindu eating and drinking constitute the Kingdom of Heaven. When the food is cooked, all the menfolk are served first ; the mother has her reward if they enjoy it. Afterwards the women eat, then bathe and worship at the shrine—usually a niche in the wall—where sits the household god receiving the offerings of flowers. The house mother leads the way ; her worship is simple, because the principal part of it is done by her husband, her eldest son, or by the family priest. During the midday hours the womenfolk rest, or amuse themselves by spinning ; one may read aloud, or relate from the Ramayana or other books. There are objectionable stories no doubt in some of these books, but this belongs to a different subject and to another aspect of zenana life which has no place here.

At sunset there is the preparation for the evening meal, and after that comes night. There is no fixed hour for going to bed, as those of the West understand it, and there are no rooms set apart as bedrooms. The bedsteads are turned up against the wall during the day, and when required for the night are put down in the most convenient place according to the season. During the hot months, in Northern India, the roof or courtyard, open to the sky, is the most desirable bedroom. During the rains, or in the damp atmosphere of the southern provinces, the shelter of the veranda is a necessity. In the cold season of the north every one keeps indoors. Since there is no limit as to space, seeing there are no separate rooms, nor to the number of bedsteads, there is no difficulty in entertaining strangers unawares ; moreover, they bring their own bedding. The men use the outer parts of the house ; if of the poorer class, they may even sleep in the street. The women congregate in one of the large inner courts or rooms. During hot nights, when every one is restless, there is generally some one who entertains the company with tales of princesses, kings, and sorcerers, or the " things " one fears.

Thus, in quiet seclusion, is played the drama of birth, marriage, death, each not so much a pulse of nature, but a religious act.

The birth of a son is the Hindu woman's hope ; without the fulfilment of this desire her life has little purpose ; without any children at all, it has none. Sometimes to avoid shock, when the poor baby happens to be a girl, the mother is told that it is a boy. Later on the child makes her way into the family affection, but almost from her birth the mother begins to weave for her the web in which she herself is a prisoner. While still a

baby, the child may be betrothed ; when about five years old she is initiated into rites of which the chief object is to secure a good husband, like Rama. She prays for this boon as well as for seven wise sons and two beautiful daughters. She prays that she may become as Mother Ganges who refreshes the thirsty, like Mother Earth whose patience is beyond compare ; that she may be like the goddess Daropati, a good cook, and like Sita of the pure heart, whose devotion was exceeding great. She is taught also another rite, which shall avert from her the evil of polygamy. The foreboding of the future casts its shadow over this child of five. She is caused to dread a possible rival, and is taught how to curse her. She sings the imprecation rhyme even during play. She invokes the whole world around her to curse the creature. She calls upon all cooking-pots, broomsticks, and birds to become her enemies ; may the pot refuse to cook her lord's food, may the broomstick beat her, may the crows pick out her eyes. The spirit of jealousy and fear possesses her from birth to death.

The marriage ceremony takes place while she is still a little girl, and her husband a boy ; there have been iniquitous exceptions when an old man of eighty has been married to a child. The time chosen should be during the first five months, beginning from February. For the actual ceremony the time has to be carefully fixed, for it must fall as the propitious star allows. The whole marriage festival lasts about a week. The first stage is called the binding ceremony ; in it the priest ties the hands of the bride and bridegroom with flowers. The bride's father says : " I give you, Soma," and the bridegroom replies : " I have received her." The priest then

looses their hands, pours holy Ganges water on their heads, and pronounces the benediction. The sacred fire is made and kept burning during the festal days ; the principal ceremony is that of the seven steps round the fire, which completes the marriage. The bride and bridegroom, holding each other by the hand, walk three times round the sacred fire ; each circle is supposed to be done in seven steps. While they are walking round, the priest repeats a spell, which the bridegroom says with him : " By taking seven steps with me do thou become my friend ; by taking seven steps together we become friends ; I shall become thy friend." In a court of justice this is the test ceremony by which it is decided whether a disputed marriage has been completed or not. Many guests now take their leave. Then follows the Lamp Song, from the marriage song of Rama, which the women sing while holding lamps in their hands.

The festival days pass in ceremony and music, but all the while the bride is never asked if she consents or not. In this respect there is no divergence from the fixed rule. In minor matters the ceremonial varies according to caste and country. After the festival the girl-bride goes home. She is received with joy by her mother, and has much pleasure in showing off her wedding clothes and jewels to admiring friends and relatives. Then she runs off to play with her companions, some married and some not, for she has still a year or two left for play. The final send-off to her husband's house does not take place until she is twelve or thirteen. Formerly the age limit was from five to eleven years all over India. From extreme youth until old age the Hindu woman passes her years in work and worship ; serving her husband

and children, the worship of her inner life flowing on to the Everywhere of the gods. Receiving nothing she gives her all.

The Hindu religion was not instituted for the benefit of women, yet woman is its ardent supporter. The idolatrous practices and superstitious cults could not live without her. She is the heart of Hinduism, as indeed she herself is Mother India. She observes all the feasts and fasts, whether it be the Mother Durga festival of many days during the rising moon, or the Mother Kali festival of darkness, at the wane. No feasts in the Hindu calendar are entirely free from immorality, but some are worse than others. It is strange that the feast of Sarasvati, the Goddess of Wisdom, should be disgraced by indecency and immorality, but it is inconceivable that good women not only go themselves, but take their little girls with them. This is a devotion to religion which passes the bounds of sanity. The capacity for devotion which sees nothing wrong in the beloved object is the Hindu woman's weakness as well as her strength.

But there are beautiful customs. There are the lovely feasts of spring and autumn, when all is gladness, light, and amusement: these are bright places in a toilsome round of work. For what is woman's life but toil from morning till night? Serving with scant recognition, sickness, and pain, and at the last: "What do I know? It is dark!"

It is not too sad a thing when a mother dies before old age comes, while her husband yet lives, and her son is strong to fulfil the funeral rites. It is as if at evening she were going to rest, to lie on the heart of Mother Earth, a brass vessel of curd and Ganges water by her side, a lamp in her hand, waiting for Yama,

the king of death. He is a mystical being clothed in red, as a bride is clothed, and crowned with rubies. It is said that Savitri followed Yama through forest and river when he was bearing away the soul of her husband. As she went she pleaded that it might be given to her. Moved by her sorrow, the king turned and granted her request; then Savitri looking up in gratitude saw that he was no longer the king of death, but the king of love.

It is not hard to die surrounded by family affection, but should her husband die first, and leave her, ah! then she will be a woman of all the sorrows. In older days she could make the supreme sacrifice, and follow her dead through fire. The way to the pyre was as the passing of a royal personage, or of a deity. The sick and the destitute prayed her to touch them with her hand, prisoners were set free if she but looked on them. When about to ascend the sacrificial fire, she would turn eastwards to bless and praise and supplicate the gods, calling upon the Guardians of the Eight Regions of the world and of her own soul. At last she would say: "Yama, king of death, and you, day, night, and twilight, witness that I die for my beloved, by his side, on his funeral pile." This ordeal is now a thing of the past, but the widow's sorrows have no end; that is unless she ceases to be a Hindu woman. Her lot is hard. It is an endless round of fasting and penance, and she may be said to die daily. If she has no son, her lot is harder still, and when it is time to "go out," as they say, she has none to retrieve her soul in passing.

Some one walking by, saw a dying Brahmani who had no relatives. The neighbours had done what was necessary; she was lying on the ground, a

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vessel of Ganges water was on the ground beside her, a lamp had been put in her hand to lighten her on her journey, but it had gone out. The widow, childless and forsaken, dies, as an Indian writer expresses it, "ten times a day." But selfless, patient, submissive to what she believes to be her decree, she waits. It is a weary thing to wait alone, so she will be glad when the time draws to an end, and some day, "as a bird leaves the branch of a tree," she will leave the stricken life, and return to Him from Whom she came.

Most fatherly of Fathers, we are Thine ;
Thou art our guardian, advocate, and friend,
O let Thy pitying soul turn in compassion,
And slay us not, for one sin nor for many,
Deliver us to-day, to-morrow, every day.

—*From the Vedas*

Of all those that beseech Thy great tenderness of heart,
Be mindful, O Lord.

—*From the Liturgy of the Russian Church*

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILD

INDIA is the motherland, not only in the accepted term, but literally and spiritually. She receives the life, passing and coming in.

It was a day of furnace heat, for the short spring-time was over ; the ground was burning, and cracked as by fire. The village, small and squat, with no high buildings that could cast a shadow, seemed to crouch under the glare. In the courtyard of one of the houses was a group of women. There was the head mother with the relatives of the family who had come to hear the good news that a man had been born into the world. The little mother was lying on the ground in a dark, airless, inner room. Some of the visitors who tried to crowd into the room were kept out with difficulty ; they became impatient—they had been listening so long to hear the first cry of life. Some one who knew that the child was dead shrank from telling them all at once, so marked time by assuring them that the mother was well. “ Yes, yes, but what of the child ? I hear no cry,” said the mother-in-law. They were told that the little daughter was dead. “ Then nothing matters,” was all they said, and one of them went to look how the dead had fallen, so that she could foretell from the position whether the next child would be a boy or a girl.

The baby girl missed nothing, for no welcome would have been given her ; she escaped much—the lamentation of the family, and the anger of the grandmother. The poor mother had no mercy shown her, for was it not her fault ? Somehow, somewhere, in another life, she must have committed a great sin to merit so great a punishment.

After the hot day, we went out past the cornfields towards the wilderness, to the edge of the last field. Where the waste began, grew a weird tree. It was thickset, gnarled, and bulbous ; on the dust-laden branches was a growth of scarlet flowers. Round the trunk were strands of cotton, earthen lamps long since burnt out were lying at the root ; it was a sacred tree, demon-haunted. Presently a group of women bearing a pitiful little burden drew near ; very quickly they made a hole in the ground, placed the baby in it as if sitting up, a thin covering of dust was thrown over, a few words muttered, a lamp lighted, and they were gone. The words were the verse of a song which they whispered down to the ghost of the baby girl :—

<i>Gur khawin</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Eat sugar
<i>Reshm katin</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Spin silk
<i>Wir ghallin</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Send a brother
<i>Ap na awin</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Don't come back

that is : “ We wish you well, but have no desire to see you any more.” While the burial was taking place, kites and vultures flying swiftly towards us gathered together ; dogs crept ever nearer—they waited very patiently and in utter silence until the women had gone ; then they fell upon the dead, for there was no “ Rizpah ” to drive them away.

It was sunset when we went homewards, and the fields were flooded with gold. Eastward the moon

was rising full and glorious, and a tide of silver flowed through the whispering wheat. The sun sank ; with what haste ! The gold faded, the silver brightened, for the night had come. A lamp newly lit glimmered at the root of the sacred tree.

Supposing the child had lived ? If she had lived to grow up in her poor surroundings, there would have been much to fear for her. But her lot is not a typical nor an average one. There are troops of happy little girls playing by the village pond, or in the courts of Hindu houses in the towns.

There is Surajo Mukhi, happiest of all. At her birth the family was disappointed of a son—there is no doubt about it—but Surajo knew nothing of it, for even before she could understand, the first place had been given her in the heart of the household. They simply could not help it, for never was there such a babe of winsomeness. She was true to her name from the first, causing sunshine everywhere, and as she grew older, she stood like a tall sunflower among her people. “Kaki”—i.e. “apple of the eye”—she was called by both father and mother, and but for her charming disposition, she would have become unbearable, so spoilt was she. Her parents, although simple village folk, were of good caste, and comparatively rich. It follows, therefore, that their love-gifts were costly and of weight. Surajo’s few childish troubles arose from them. Her ears had to be pierced in many places so that precious jewels might hang therefrom ; her nose was adorned with a ring ; her pretty hair was woven round a knot of gold ; over the erection was thrown her veil, so when she stepped forth, it was, so to speak, with horn on high.

But this fine attire was nothing in comparison with

the jewels and dresses which were shown her one day after she had grown a little older. Surajo caught her breath at the sight ; with a gasp of delight she lifted a gold face-ornament, and held it up to catch the sunshine that was pouring through the doorway into the dark room. " Look, mother ! " she exclaimed. Her mother appeared to be examining a *kurta* of crimson covered over with gold, as if to find the flaw of the Evil Eye somewhere ; her face was turned away ; but Surajo was intent upon the jewel. " Look ! " she insisted, patting her mother's cheek—it was wet ! Then Surajo's heart sank a little. What was the matter ? Was some one ill ? Mother looked like that once before—once upon a time, when . . . but no ! The dear mother was smiling ! Surajo laughed with joy and relief, as she hid her face under her mother's veil, and clasped her close as she had never ceased to do since she was a little child. Indeed, she was but a baby still ! Asked her age, she would say : " Three or five years old, I think, but I am not sure."

Not very long after this came a week of bewilderment. It began with a day of ecstasy, for Surajo wore all her beautiful clothes and jewels—not forgetting the pendant for the forehead, that never failed to make her heart beat with pride. Of course it was sad leaving her mother, but it was to be for a very little while ; besides, so much was happening that there was no time to cry, and there was a ride in a gorgeous palanquin to a village somewhere or other where she was to meet her husband, whatever that was.

Then followed an almost regal reception by a great number of beautifully-dressed relatives, who told her what a lovely bride she was. Yes, it was

wonderfully exciting, until she began to feel very tired, and finally, towards the end of the day, she disgraced herself by becoming very cross. The relatives told her to be good, and to sit beside her honourable mother-in-law. Surajo smiled, and ran towards her, for was she not the kind one who had given her good things ever since she came ?

Then something happened. It was all so sudden. Was it the voice, the motherly arms opened wide ? Something gripped her by the throat and wrung her heart. " Let me go ! " she wailed, and covering her face with her veil, she rushed towards the doorway, all her anklets and bracelets clashing as she went. " Mother ! I want my mother ! " She tried to force the door open, beating against it with her dear little hands. Somebody—surely it was the ever-kind one—took her in her arms and soothed her to sleep. Nothing happened after that, for she slept for a long while.

She would have slept all night if a crowd of chattering women had not dragged her out of bed. Surajo rubbed her eyes. It was very strange. The fire she had seen in the courtyard on arrival was burning brightly ; all around in a circle of darkness were many faces. Presently she was walking hand in hand with a small bejewelled figure. It was her bridegroom, of course, looking just as every one had described him to her. She must have slept for several hours after that, for the next thing which stood out in her memory was the sight of home, and her mother's face. How good it was ! It was so pleasant, too, to show off all her grandeur now that she could run off to play at the very minute when she wished to get rid of it all.

The strange week quickly slid into the background, but the thought of it haunted the child now and again,

even at play, and no wonder, for what was the song they sang while spinning together ?

My mother-in-law twisted the cotton for spinning,
Oh, my mother !

There are many verses, but each begins with " My mother-in-law," and ends with " My mother." The refrain seemed to echo through the sugar canes as they played hide-and-seek. It continued to echo wherever she went, even during the years—the very few years—that followed. " Why should the thought of my mother make me feel sad ? " she would say to herself.

One day she asked a young girl relative what it meant ? " What would you, sister ? It is because you must leave her some day." " And then ? " . . . " Oh ! then ? " . . . the girl laughed. . . . " You will have your mother-in-law." This was in a way no new thing to Surajo. Her songs, even her prayers and worship, taught her much. She could recall the week of wonder, and now in a measure realized whom she had seen in the light of " the fire," but all had come to an end, and things had gone on as before ; yet no, not quite as before.

Her mother had become more grave than she used to be, more sad—not always, only now and then. At times she would serve her daughter almost as a servant her mistress ; once, with a passionate devotion that almost frightened her, Surajo knelt before her—for ever afterwards she could bring back her mind to some corner of the room where her mother was cooking, the firelight gleaming on the brass vessels, playing upon the dear face. " Mother ! " she said, clasping her mother's feet ; " you work for us all, you are tired ; is that why you are so sad ? Why

are you grieving, mother ? ” But her mother drew her veil lower over her face, and if Surajo looked up she would have seen the smile as long ago, before the week of the wedding. “ Nay, nay, my child, it is nothing ; do I look sad ? ” She smiled again. “ I never tire of serving my beloved ones ; it is my joy and pride when the father of Ganesh says that nowhere does he eat bread as it is made by my hands. I lay my forehead on his feet. And as for thee, Kaki, I would die for thee—nay, I am not weary. Is it not my life to serve ? ” She did not say that it was the parting from her daughter that grieved her soul, that she dreaded the day when she could serve her no longer. The fire died down, for the meal was ready, and Surajo thought no more about it for a while, and there were many pleasant things to make her forget. For she lived under the best conditions of family life, where the parents live up to the measure of light granted them.

There are feast days when children have playthings and new clothes. There is the Feast of Spring, when the mustard plant covers the ground with gold, and all the world—dressed in garment of yellow, as the flowers of the field—goes forth on picnic ; and Surajo herself, a gracious little golden figure trotting along by her mother’s side, would be one of them. On great occasions, a visit paid to the Golden Temple would be the most memorable. They would leave home early for an outing such as this, the fields white with dew as if covered with hoar frost. It lay in beads of silver on the roses and jasmine. These were already being gathered in baskets, to make chains—necklaces of pearls they were called, for a jasmine bud tight shut is like a pearl. They would find them ready for sale in the bazaar by the time they arrived.

Surajo would wear one of them with a rose for a clasp, just for the sheer pleasure of it, as well as in honour of the day. Passing through the Gate of Vision there was the delight of walking on the marble pavement, and breathing the scent of a thousand flowers that floated around them. Flowers were lying in heaps ready for offerings. People were buying from the flower-seller, for none passed over the bridge empty handed ; even little babies had a rose or two, or a marigold, to lay before the sacred book. Surajo and her mother would choose beautiful roses, for, although Hindus, they were joyfully ready to pay tribute to the more austere faith of the Sikhs.

In the autumn came the Feast of Lanterns. The house would be made clean for the new year and cold season, and a sackful of lamps would be bought from the potter, who made them under the acacia trees that grew just outside the village. Every house would take in a supply, the walls and roofs would be lined with them, and after dark there would be a blaze of light, for the feast was in honour of Lakshmi, the goddess of light. Surajo would forget little sorrows among so great joys, until something from the shadows whispered, and she would see her mother's face as she told her of what life meant—"just living for those one loved, even as Sita, who followed her lord to the world's end."

Even as Sita. The story was familiar ; what daughter of India has not heard it, and pictured to herself the wonderful princess as she leaves all for her husband ? Unconsciously Surajo would regard it as the symbol of what has to be her soul's attainment, the utter devotion of the woman's life. She would realize, although dimly and imperfectly, that it was towards

this goal that she was being steered—skilfully and how swiftly—along the river of life. Every game she played foreshadowed it, her dress and jewels reminded her of it, and, during some rare moments of insight, she was afraid. But no one can live in the current of thought and hereditary instinct and not become one with it. There was therefore no sense of revolt, no impulse towards escape from her surroundings ; to Surajo it was, as it had been from the beginning, a passive acceptance of duty, the call of her land and race.

This capacity for, and training towards, devotion is the central instinct of the woman's soul. It becomes a factor for good or evil at times of crisis. One sees it in the love which sacrifices itself for a sick child, in the fury of the tigress at bay to defend its young ; and on some tragic day we know what a woman of love and gentleness is capable of—what love indeed, and what despair ! Might not such intensity of devotion arise simply because of its restricted channel ? The supreme outlet is denied ; could the Hindu woman find her spiritual home in God, her love would arise from its pure source to pour forth upon all around her. But there is none among the innumerable company of gods and goddesses upon whom she may rest her spirit. The chief goddess mother, Kali, is an object of fear ; Sita, lovely as she is, and her highest ideal, is a sister-soul, ever seeking, wistful, worshipping her lord ; so her love is confined within the walls of her home.

Granted a good husband and children, a merciful mother-in-law, the home life will give her ample scope to lavish her affection ; she will be satisfied—if the sleeping soul within her does not awake and clamour for the love that is the best of all. She may be happy,

but the fact remains that her home, blest as it may become, is not safe against sorrow. The door, which shuts her in so safely, cannot shut out the angel of death. And then?—— Why, then, death ends it all. Her child is taken away, and she knows not where to find him ; even the poor little ghost is a terror to her ; she prays that it may not come back. Fate behind and before presses her down. Did not this sorrow come from some misdeed in a former existence ? What unknown evil awaits her farther on in the dark ? Thus her devotion is but a cause of grief. It stakes its all on this life. Her heart, like the homing pigeon, nestles down in the shelter of her home, finding there its nest, but above, the awful clouds are gathering, and sooner or later the home is swept away. The objects of her love are but hostages in the hands of misfortune.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTHER

THERE is an exquisite bas-relief of Luca della Robbia which expresses all that might be said about the Hindu mother. It represents the child and his mother, he looking at a stranger, smiling but half afraid, clasping the sheltering arm, as if to reassure himself of his mother's presence, ready at any moment to turn away and hide his face on her breast. The mother's smile of satisfied love seems to say that her child is her all. Her thought is for none but him; she is content to fade into the background so that he should be glorified.

This trait of self-abnegation, although typical of perfect motherhood in all nations, has its ultimate expression in an eastern, and especially in a Hindu, mother. She is no longer spoken of by name, for she is now known as the child's mother. At this point the eastern mother differs from her western sister in that she is above all else the mother of her son. A daughter may be the object of her love, but not of her pride. The outlet of her sacrificing affection is narrowed to her son. The picture of the child and his mother finds its counterpart in India from the beginning until now. One sees it, line by line, in the charming gesture of the child and the look on the mother's face. Indian babies are afraid of strangers.

However kind the voice or smile, they turn away, and with what pride and tenderness does the mother look on the little head, while she says : " Ah ! he is afraid ! He comes to his mother." Then she will kiss the little hands that grasp her so close, as if thanking him for the love that singled her out from all the world.

It is in motherhood that the Indian woman finds her supreme consolation, for, if unlettered and ignorant, rarely is she the helpmeet of her husband ; she cannot enter into his life as a whole when she is not his equal, so she becomes the comrade of her baby son. Of course she spoils him utterly. Her love has its limitations ; earthly and finite in its expression, the divine gift is misdirected too often, and the mother, from sheer love, will hinder the best interests of her child. But she is his mother. He never forgets her. " One can get another wife," he will say, " but a mother, never." " Your wife may weep for you for three days ; your mother, as long as she lives." As his mother, she will rule his married life. Thus the wrong is righted, the inequality adjusted ; an uncrowned queen at first, she mounts her throne in due time. The mother's glance of the clinging child might be translated thus : " My beloved and longed for, my joy and crown."

There is current in the northern plain a story about a mother. She was going one day to a distant village ; her little son on her hip, a large basket on her head. It was long ago when there were wolves in the jungle ; one gave chase, the mother put the child under the basket, and sat on it waiting for the attack. Her cry brought the villagers to the rescue, and this is what they found—a dead mother, and her living child. The little one was safely hidden under the basket, but drenched in his mother's blood. This story is

sometimes used as an illustration of the divine Love Incarnate Who died for us. It never loses its appeal, no one doubts its truth, for it is just what the most timid woman among them would do; she would give her life for her son. . . .

The changing seasons come and go with scarcely any interval between. They follow one another like beads on a string, each one distinct, yet close to the next in the round. The cold evenings of winter pass into the burning nights of summer, through that short but most exquisite of seasons—the time of spring.

Surajo the child passed out of the brief spring-time of her life into its full summer almost unaware. Her new home was not a strange place. The kind house mother who took the little bride into her heart at the first hour of the week of wonder had kept her there; so on arrival Surajo found a place prepared for her. In any case the household would have obeyed Bibi Ganga De's commands regarding the new sister-in-law, but Surajo entered into the life of each of its members so quietly that they accepted her from the beginning as one of themselves. At first there were twinges of jealousy when they realized how far above them was this sunflower. None could compare with her in beauty; never had a bride worn such jewels of price. And was she not preferred before all, seeing that the honourable mother-in-law had allotted to her a cooking-place better than that of any other wife of her sons! Yea, verily, a name and a place were hers which caused bitter thoughts to lodge in the heart. But as smoke passes away when the fire dies down, the thoughts flew away one by one. So when Surajo became the mother of Hira all hearts were at rest.

It might have been otherwise, for the chief cause

of jealousy among Indian mothers is the son of their neighbour. Granny, fearing this, hastened to hang a charm against the Evil Eye round Hira's neck; furthermore, a tiger's claw was appended in order to instil courage into his infant mind. The talismans worked wonders. Granny gave them all the credit when she saw how the heart of the household bowed down before the little child. The baby king was never deposed, even when as his age increased so did his wilfulness!

What would not a della Robbia give to lift the veil from an eastern home! The young mother in the midst, her little son in her arms looking out on the world with the eyes of a fawn. He smiles upon his subjects, but if one of them dares to call him, he at once turns away, to hide his face on his mother's breast.

Accustomed to so much that was sorrowful in the relationship of the mother-in-law and her sons' wives, the memory of Ganga De and her happy family life is held in grateful remembrance. Is it a perfect picture of home life? By no means. The several members of the family were not always kindly affectioned one towards the other—some one whispers that "once upon a time!" Yes, once there was a terrific—shall we say—misunderstanding between the eldest son's wife and her sister-in-law next in order of precedence. No one knows what it was about, but this was how they discussed it together: each lady was seated in her own particular cooking-place. Turn about they used strong language, one of the ladies looked over the low wall, and said something annoying and disappeared. Then, vice versa, her opponent did likewise, only what she said was more annoying. This went on till they became speechless. So it ended? No, we do not give

up in a hurry, in the Punjab at least. When we have no more power of utterance left, we put a flat iron pot against the outside wall of the cooking-place to show that we have not finished, so that when convenient we can begin again. It is rather a good plan, for we can get our cooking done between whiles. It is said that Hira's mother helped to smooth matters, and that the head mother used great tact, so that after a few hours the girdles were removed and put to their ordinary uses.

What a long-suffering granny she was ! Even the naughtiest child could not move her to displeasure. " Is it not a child ? " she would say ; " he will become wise when he grows older." Or : " Poor Jewel ! she will have to be sent to her mother-in-law some day " ; but that threat held no fear for the small offender—why should it ?—when she reflected that it meant going to another granny.

During the years that followed, Surajo served her day and generation. Her mother-in-law trusted and depended on her more and more, her own daughters being in far-away homes ; if in trouble, she always turned to Surajo. So it came to pass that, falling ill, while away on a visit to the city, she sent for the " daughter of the sweet tongue and gentle hand." " Tell the mother of Hira to come at once," she said, " tell her that my liver is on fire, tell her to bring some mustard fresh from the field, and a pumpkin—she used to put sliced pumpkins on my head to cool it ; tell her that the omen was bad, tell her I saw a broomstick the wrong way up."

" Yes, sister," they answered, " we will send a messenger at once." Another, trying to soothe her, said that poor granny hardly knew what she was saying. " The fever that never breaks " had " sprung

upon her," as she expressed it. So Hira and his mother and a few brothers and sisters arrived on the following evening. To her grief Surajo saw that the end of their fellowship was at hand ; very little could be done, but her presence did much to comfort Ganga De during her last hours. It was a service of love. "Mother !" she whispered, using the dear name, which might call back even the dying for a moment. The thin old face appeared above the quilt like a wedge, motionless, impassive. The pulse hurried on with the haste of a messenger who has not a moment to stop, to hear, or to understand. The lamp was fading in the daylight now stealing in ; a wail rose from a neighbouring roof ; some one had died. Surajo shivered. An hour passed, then one of the women in the room woke up, and looking down on the bed suddenly called the others. The dying woman was laid on the floor, some one went to fetch the Ganges water, the lamp, and to send the news to the relatives. Surajo knelt down and whispered once more : "Mother, dear mother." The eyelids flickered—no more. Something—was it a smile?—passed over the face. Surajo looked again more intently ; the face had sharpened into the unmistakable stillness.

According to Hindu custom, Ganga De, being an old woman, received the full honours of rejoicing at burial. She had fulfilled her days, like a shock of corn fully ripe ; the funeral rites were for this reason exceedingly painful to the daughter-in-law. Long before the funeral, a crowd had collected at the door ; they had come for their share of money and dates which would be scattered among them when the procession formed up. A murmur of satisfaction arose when after a while of waiting one of the children

nearest the door called out : " The dead has come." Then the rejoicing began ; the band played a lively English air while the coffin, or catafalque, was carried out. It was made of wicker work somewhat in the shape of a boat, and covered with red bunting and flags of green and yellow paper. When the dead, wrapped in silk, was laid in, the nearest relative covered it with a silk scarf. The bier was then raised shoulder high, the band played louder, the crowd scrambled for the coins and dates that were thrown lavishly among them.

Surajo watched the red ship sailing down on the stream of people till it turned a corner of the street. How it swayed from side to side ! The bearers carried it unsteadily ; they were trying to keep step with the music of the band. When the last wave of the procession passed out of sight, Surajo turned away sick at heart. She thought of a day long since, when hearing of the dead being cremated, she had hurried home to her mother and begged her not to burn her, if she should die. " Will it go on for ever, mother ? " she almost heard herself saying. She could see the saffron-coloured veil her mother had worn that day ; the scent of the spices used in cooking, that had become a part of it, seemed to rise into her face, as on that day when she sought shelter in its folds. She had never referred to the subject again, but the horror of fire—hell fire—never left her, even during the happy years of youth and motherhood. . . .

The years never change, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, come and go. The Hindu child and mother have come and gone after the same manner for centuries, and so it ever shall be, unless from among them some should arise and fulfil their destiny in other ways.

SECTION II

THE MOSLEM WOMAN

CHAPTER I

(i) THE MOSLEM WOMAN AND HER FAITH

THE faith of the Hindu woman is like a tree which strikes its roots deep into the soil ; as the number of its leaves so are the objects of her worship for multitude. Her spirit dwells among them, spreads abroad, becomes extensive.

The Moslem woman is otherwise. Her faith is not of the soil. It came with her ancestors from a far country, and the Islamic faith, although aggressive, is essentially exclusive. It shuts her in. Confined to that part of the house from which no glimpse of the outer world can be seen, her spirit becomes intensive, but her gaze is not so much inward as towards the beyond. The carpet on which she kneels at prayer is marked like the *mehrab* and points towards Mecca. She looks far away from the place of her birth towards the land of tents and wanderings. But her worship is not that of outward things. It is rather the concentration of the soul towards the unseen, and this makes for strength of character and power.

As regards her home life, the Moslem woman is not inextricably woven into the religious life of her people as is the Hindu woman. A "devotee" she may be, and bigoted she usually is, but this is the result of intense conviction inherited from her militant forefathers. Her faith is not so much her atmosphere as her armour.

The Moslem Indian woman is, generally speaking, descended from converts who accepted the faith at the point of the sword. Her practical religious observances have become modified in some ways, but in creed and in the intensity of her faith in the Prophet himself she is at one with all her Moslem sisters throughout the world. Mohammed is the personification of her religion ; she is its most faithful adherent, and yet there is no honourable place for her in the religion of the Prophet. She is excluded from most of its privileges, but from none of its penalties. She has a low place in its laws ; but notwithstanding all disabilities her devotion to the lawgiver is complete. Asked why she trusted in the Prophet, seeing that as a woman she received so little from his religion, a Moslem Indian woman declared her readiness to follow him anywhere and whatever the consequences. Others may hold the faith more loosely, but such as she form the type of all strict Moslems.

This devotion to the person of the Prophet gives the Moslem woman a fixity of purpose and a definite aim. There are no blurred outlines in the form of her creed as there are in that of the Hindu. For it is not Mohammedanism, but the religion of Mohammed, that covers her with zeal like a cloak ; he himself is the soul of her faith. The Moslem woman expressed her personal character and religion, as well as the battle-cry of her people, when she said : " I will follow the lord Mohammed wherever he leads—even unto hell." She is shut into a prison-house from which naught else is visible. She accepts and practises her faith in a spirit of simplicity and ferocity akin to that of the terrible wilderness from which it came.

(ii) MOHAMMED

THE PROPHET OF THE WILDERNESS—HIS CREED AND RELIGION

IF there had not been Mohammed, there would have been no Islam. If there had been no wilderness, there might have been no prophet. The solitudes which fostered his wild and elemental nature and moulded his character, inspired his message. As the winds in the south sweep through, came the man and his creed. He gave it, as befits the wilderness, a form of austere simplicity, and no encumbrances. He sent it out with his armies over the world. Storm troops indeed! As a whirlwind they swept through the four corners of the earth, taking with them compressed rations, the minimum of clothing, and a creed that could be understood, imparted, accepted, or rejected at the point of death. But like the whirlwind it might have spent itself, leaving its dust among the havoc it made, had not the founder chained the heart of the faith for ever to Mecca, as the holy city. The Kaaba became the lodestar of the Moslem soul.

The story of the man and his creed is a simple one. The austerity of his nature caused him to revolt against idolatry. He preached the unity of God. He had also, to some extent, a feeling of reverence for our Lord. If he had at that time received the Gospel in its purity, he might have become one of its chief messengers. But he saw Christianity in a corrupt form, so he refused revelation, excepting that which he pretended came to him from God Himself. His rapid moral decline and deterioration date from his yielding to the claim of unique apostleship.

The groundwork of his creed, stated simply, is that

there is no god but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God. The acceptance of this was the supreme test when a captive was afforded the alternative of death or the faith. It is so still. At first Mohammed preached, trying to persuade men, but when he became powerful he propagated his creed by the sword.

The Koran is the sacred book of the Moslem. It is regarded as a perpetual miracle both by Mohammed and his followers. The orthodox belief is that it is eternal, uncreated, inscribed with all the divine decrees on a permanent tablet. On the "night of power" an angel brought a copy of it down to the lowest heaven, and during the course of twenty-three years recited it part by part to Mohammed, who then dictated it to chosen followers. These portions were written on "leaves, date-stones, and the hearts of men." Afterwards they were bound into the book as now in use.

The book itself can be a beautiful thing. A special copy, such as a queen might use, written on vellum coloured and gilded like an oriental scroll, is a thing to covet. The Arabic script, each letter an ornament in itself, twined together, covers the pages with tracery like the carving of a marble screen. In Northern India there are copies to be had where, under the margin of each page, is a translation of the Arabic into Urdu, written in the Persian character. Here we see depicted after a manner the two sections of the Moslem creed. It was the spirit of the Sunni that traced the strong, angular, Arabic characters, almost like trellis work, on the page, whereas that of the Shiah bent and rounded his Persian lettering until it resembled the tendrils of a flower. As the vine on the lattice, so would he adorn his faith.

The Koran is not the only rule of faith. Islam has what are called four pillars : (1) the Koran ; (2) the Hadis, i.e. the traditions concerning the sayings and doings of Mohammed ; (3) the unanimous consent of the doctors ; (4) the analogical reasoning of the learned as to the precepts and practices of the Prophet.

Religion is divided by the Moslem doctors into two parts, the dogmatic and the practical. The first contains six articles upon what must be believed concerning God, angels, sacred oracles, the prophet, the resurrection, the judgment, and predestination. The practical consists of five pillars, or foundations : (1) the recital of the creed ; (2) five times of daily prayer, before sunrise, at noon, before sunset, after sunset, and when night sets in (the prayers are recited in a fixed form of Arabic words) ; (3) thirty days' fast during the month of Ramazan ; (4) almsgiving ; (5) pilgrimage to Mecca.

Prayer must be said towards the Kaaba at Mecca. This is the first requirement. Most houses and mosques throughout the Moslem world are built toward the meridian line of Mecca. The Kaaba is the square stone building in the centre of the mosque at Mecca. It contains the Hajr-ul-aswad, or black stone, which Moslems say was white originally but became black by reason of men's sins. The Kaaba is also called the Qibla.

The articles of the creed and the rules of the religion are clear and as rigidly fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which could not be altered. But in detail the religion becomes modified according to the country in which the Moslem lives. In India, especially in the south, it has changed in many ways. The influence of Hinduism and the luxuriousness of

nature have profoundly affected it. Islam is a wild plant which degenerates in a garden. This modification is found in India in varying degrees. In the more arid regions of the north, and farther still into the desert fastnesses of Afghanistan and over the Roof of the World, the rigid lines of the creed clasp more firmly, more intolerantly.

When Islam passed through and conquered Persia, its bleak faith became intolerable, and there arose an attempt to soften it, but it did not succeed. So two sects formed, or rather, a liberal sect called the Shiah broke off, leaving the main stem, the Sunni, conservative and reactionary as before.

Among the Shiahhs the mystics found a home. Islam is a virile creed. It allows of no softness, no rebate of the terrors of judgment and hell. The mystics thought that, instead of fear, love might become the motive power which would draw men to God. But the Sunnis would have none of it. It is not strange then that among the first mystic seekers after God was a woman, called Rabia. Her heart thirsted after God in the dry and weary land of her faith, where no water is. Her creed might be formulated in the words: "God is love"; her teaching was that we must love God only, sacrificing everything in this world, so that one day we may be reunited to Him in the world to come. It is remarkable that she should be buried in Jerusalem—the weary pilgrim finding a resting place almost under the shadow of the Cross. Her tomb is still a place of pilgrimage, while her name and life are a possession and a heritage, especially to her Moslem sisters; a gentleness handed down through the strife of centuries, a foreshadowing of the love to come.

That the name and manner of life of the majority of mystics and Sufis should have become a byword for all that is futile, selfish, and immoral, does not detract from the worth of many of the early seekers nor of those who follow after.

It is the sect of the Sunnis which prevails in India. The Shiah, and consequently Sufi mystics, are to be found in the Persian element, or in the tribe of fakirs. These deal with the spirit rather than the form of religion. The mosque, the Koran, the rosary, are common to all sects.

The mosque owes its charm to space and to the spirit of austerity which like a wind from the desert has swept it clean. There is nothing within the shrine but the pulpit and prayer niche. The outer courts form a quadrangle open to the sky. At the entrance is a tank where the faithful perform the prescribed ablutions. The whole effect is that of a caravanserai. The Prophet of the wandering races arranged that their place of worship should also be a place where the wayfarer might wash his feet and rest awhile.

As the follower of Islam is bidden ever to look backwards to Arabia, in every mosque there is the mehrab, oriented towards Mecca, which is sometimes called the true Qibla, for it means the turning away of the outward gaze from everything save the direction of the holy house of God. There the imam stands to pray. In all mosques he turns a little to one side to correct any inaccuracy of pitch.

The one other accessory of worship in the mosque is the *mimbar*, or pulpit, from which a moulvi expounds the Koran and traditions. It is ascended by three steps. Mohammed stood on the first or highest, Abu

Bakr on the second, Omar on the third. Osman would have descended lower still ; as that was impossible he fixed upon the second, from which it is still the custom to preach.

The Friday's sermon is called the *khutba*. The sermon must be in Arabic and include prayers for Mohammed, the companions, and the king. Short sermons are meritorious. The Prophet remarked that " the length of a man's prayers and the shortness of his sermons is a sign of his sense and understanding ; therefore make your prayers long and your *khutba* short."

The rosary is a personal thing. It is used by all, in the home as well as in the mosque. It is composed of ninety-nine beads, which is the number of the attributes of God. His name completes the one hundred but requires no bead of remembrance. The strict Moslem, rosary in hand, stands, bends, prostrates himself in prayer, but his prayer is neither intercession nor petition. It is a recitation, an act of his religion. He prays wherever he may happen to be at the stated hour, but on Friday it is obligatory to worship in the mosque. At the entrance of the outer court he takes the shoes off his feet, performs the ablutions in the tank, and joins in the common prayer with the faithful. On high days the court is crowded with worshippers, who with one mind and soul rise and fall, as the corn bends in the field when the wind passes over it. The *khutba* is then delivered from the *mimbar*. Again the multitude worships and repeats the creed with one voice, mighty and sonorous like the sound of the sea.

From the wilderness came the Prophet ; the breath of its whirlwind inspired his creed. After the simili-

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tude of its wide spaces he built his place of worship. Like a caravanserai is the parcel of ground enclosing naught but colour, light, and the shadow of things that pass. As in the desert, the worshipper is unrestrained, but it is the freedom of the wild places that no man has tamed, which offer no shelter, and through which no river passes to find the sea.

CHAPTER II

NUR JAHAN

One moment in Annihilation's waste ;
One moment of the Well of Life to taste.
The stars are setting and the Caravan
Draws to the Dawn of Nothing—O make haste !

Omar Khayyam

On my poor tomb is neither lamp nor flower
Neither a moth burns its wings.—*Nur Jahan*

FROM the palace roof can be seen the *shah dera*, or "tent of the king." It rises exquisite and alone from the sea of scrub and sand on the opposite bank of the Ravi. A few hundred yards away from the resting place of Jahangir is the tomb of Nur Jahan. We went to see it one evening, and found a tumble-down building overrun with weeds. It was a poor deserted place, just as Nur Jahan had foreseen, with neither lamp nor flower to brighten it. A few goats were nibbling the dusty leafage among the ruined heaps of brick. Since then it has been rebuilt, for the lamp of memory has been lit once more.

Another trace of her is to be seen by the Dal Lake, near Srinagar. The Moghul rule was founded in Kashmir by Akbar, but it was his son Jahangir who made the occupation beautiful with gardens and palaces. Thither came the Empress Nur Jahan with the emperor during their years of magnificence. It was

from thence that she followed him over the mountains when he was brought back to the plains to die.

Two of the palaces by the lake are regarded as belonging to the king and queen. The steps of the landing place rise out of the water, and go upwards in terraces on either side of the fountain which in olden days sent its waters splashing down from the heights. Great plane trees shade the green valleys. It is said that Nur Jahan used to sing in the black marble courts while sitting in the moonlight with her ladies. She had a beautiful voice as well as the gift of composing impromptu verses. There is a legend that during a time of estrangement, Nur Jahan called the emperor back again by a song.

Her memory is of recent date compared with that of Sita. There is no tangible memorial of Sita, whereas the tomb of Nur Jahan is with us. But the comparison of remoteness consists in character rather than in time. We think of Sita as an influence—the ideal wife exacting nothing. But in Nur Jahan we behold the queen, who demands homage. And rightly does she demand it, for how heroic, how amazing is her history !

The parents of Nur Jahan were Persians of princely lineage, but miserably poor. Hearing of opportunities under the spacious rule of Akbar, Mirza Ghial Begh set out with his wife for India. It was a long and difficult journey under any circumstances, but privations and the birth of Nur Jahan made it hard exceedingly. It was by the wayside at Kandahar that the child was born, and there she was left to fate.

It seems that the beast of burden refused to carry the mother if she insisted on bringing the infant as well. Time showed that the lady knew how to insist

when necessary. She also proved herself to be a woman of ability. She showed skill in court affairs, and in household matters as well, for did she not discover the secret of distilling attar of roses? But there would have been no court and no roses had not the little castaway been claimed by fortune! First of all a black cobra arrived to do his part. He threw his arm, so to speak, in a coil round her, and unfurled his hood for a sunshade over her head. Then a caravan drew up to the spot. Now the owner of the caravan without a doubt would instantly think of the Persian proverb: "*Ba sar-i-ganj mār*"—"Above the treasure is the snake"—or, vice versa; so being wise in snake-lore as well as fond of children he was not afraid. He knew what to do. The cobra, knowing also what was the right thing to do under the circumstances, tactfully retired.

The father and mother meanwhile were plodding onwards so slowly that they were soon overtaken by the caravan. The kind merchant gave them earthly comforts. At his request the mother was graciously pleased to take care of the child. He brought them safely to the Punjab, and through his influence they were afterwards presented at court. Mirza Ghial Begh was given a post by the emperor, and so the little Mihr-ul-nissa, as she was named at first, was brought up after the manner of those who live in the courts of kings. As she grew older Mihr-ul-nissa was given the title of Nur Mahal.

Light of the palace she was indeed. Her beauty alone would have dimmed the lamps. No picture does it justice. The art of the time cannot obscure, but it barely expresses it. One should know what a charming personage a Persian noblewoman is before looking

at her miniature, even if painted on ivory and set in precious stones.

But Nur Mahal was not merely a lovely woman. Supreme beauty would have excited and might have retained admiration, but it was by other gifts that the Nur Jahan of the future held her world in thrall. Her moral character was as high as her courage, and her fine mental endowments were well developed. She had the advantage of living during a reign which in spite of faults, failures, and deep stains of cruelty, produced a comparatively enlightened and liberal government. The emperor was of a liberal mind. He chose what he thought to be the best from all religions as well as from the methods and intellectual advantages of other countries. England and France were represented at his court. The empress-in-chief was a Hindu. She brought with her a far-away tradition of greater freedom and honour granted to women by her Aryan ancestry. Her influence made the tradition of some effect, for although *pardah* was enforced in so much as the Moghul dynasty was Islamic, there was a latent spirit of chivalry. It may be, nevertheless, that this spirit was manifested only in rare instances. Nur Mahal was an instance, and as she possessed the power not only of inspiring it, but of receiving it with restraint, she was able to use the advantages and opportunities of the period, and of her surroundings.

There is a story told of Nur Mahal while still a very young girl, which even now Moslem women relate with the deep interest given to things of the moment. It is the story of Nur Mahal and the doves.

The emperor had given a fête in the Bagh-i-Shalimar, that kingly garden of marble waterways and

cypress alleys. All the court ladies were present, and Nur Mahal and her mother were among the guests. Now the emperor had a son called Selim—a Prince Charming, although wilful and easily roused to anger. Being still very young, it was not improper for him to go about in the zenana courts and gardens.

So it happened that as Prince Selim was passing by the long line of cypresses with a pair of doves in his hand, Nur Mahal was sitting by the edge of the water. Some one called him, and he, not knowing what to do with the doves, turned round to find a servant, but seeing the little girl, said : “ Please to keep my doves for me, little lady ! ” Nur Mahal took the birds, but absorbed in her own thoughts paid no heed to them, so one flew away.

When the prince came back she gave him the one that was left. “ What ! only one ! ” he exclaimed. “ Sire ! one has flown ! ” said Nur Mahal, now frightened and startled almost to tears. The prince was annoyed exceedingly, for when had such a thing happened before ? “ Stupid ! How ? ” he demanded sternly, as was his wont when anger moved him. Such an expression had never been uttered in like manner to the spoilt child Nur Mahal, so it aroused in her a sharp resentment. With a defiant gesture she opened her hand, and turning towards the prince, said : “ So, my lord ! ” and let the dove fly away to join its mate. The prince was amazed. That gleam of anger and sweep of the hand took his breath away. No one had ever spoken to His Highness like this ! He stared at the child. How courageous ! What charm ! Then he found that his love had flown from the hand of destiny. His heart had found its mate.

“ This is the queen for me,” he said, and thus he

told the emperor. The mother of Nur Mahal was shocked, but she had also the flair for possibilities. "It is not seemly," she said to the empress, "that Prince Selim should fall in love with a maiden and tell her so, before referring the matter to her parents." Said the empress: "Ah well! He is young, and youth forgets. But with regard to the maiden, why not? Where could he find a queen beautiful as the little Nur Mahal?" "Why not?" thought the mother of Nur Mahal, "a prince for a husband is worth striving for. What a pity we did not think of this before pledging ourselves to that other engagement! Surely the mirza could break it off, if he tried!" "Not so," said her husband. "Have I not betrothed Mihr-ul-nissa to Sher Khan? I cannot break my promise."

The prince implored his father to intervene and to annul the betrothal. "Not so! Justice must come before love," said Akbar.

So Nur Mahal was married to that most perfect knight, Sher Khan, officer in the emperor's cavalry regiment. One of the satisfactory, as well as the most unexpected, episodes of the story is that for twenty years Nur Mahal was the happiest of women and the devoted wife of Sher Khan, the lion-hearted. The incident of the doves, the prince, and the garden faded away—O very far indeed!

But after many years, when, on the death of Akbar, Prince Selim, now styled Jahangir, mounted the throne, the brave officer was secretly murdered. As Jahangir had not allowed Nur Mahal and the doves to fade from his memory, there is no doubt as to the instigator thereof; especially as he immediately sent an offer of marriage to the widow. Nur Mahal refused;

she was indignant ; the lure of a throne was an insult to a faithful wife but an hour a widow ! Jahangir was surprised and very angry. He withdrew from her family all state subsidies ; nevertheless Nur Mahal the luxurious was content to live on a starving allowance for many months while she mourned her dead. But at the feast of the Ramazan they met again. The crescent moon that ended the fast rose above the black line of the cypress alley. The lure of the doves returned and the old affection.

Very soon afterwards they were married. Nur Mahal was proclaimed empress, with the title of Nur Jahan, and shared the throne as consort. Her name was struck on the coinage of the realm with that of the emperor ; her seal bore the inscription : " Nur Jahan, by the Grace of God the Consort and Partner of Jahangir." Proclamations were issued as : " By order of Her Exalted Majesty Nur Jahan." Nur Jahan differed from the Emperor in stately functions only in the fact that her name was not read in the khutba.

Jahangir caused a curtain to be hung beside the throne so that behind the veil his wife might be ever at his side. " There is wit enough in one of her fingers to rule all the kingdoms of the earth," he would say. " I shall look on while she governs." Jahangir did little else than enjoy life and look on while the empress ruled.

Her government was beneficent. Knowing that her father, although weak in other ways, was wise in statecraft, she made him prime minister. Some vexatious burdens were removed from the people. Even-handed justice was done, irrespective of race and creed. A short time of joy and power came to Nur

Jahan. It was her "splendid moment." But clouds gathered up towards her evening. There came wars and rebellion. Mahabbat Khan rose up against his father and took him prisoner.

The army was half-hearted. Nur Jahan rallied the leaders. Her eloquence was of no effect. She could not move them to attack. Then, as was the habit of the queens of old who had the courage of the lioness, Nur Jahan mounted an elephant, led the army in person, and attacked the rebels. Of her it was said : " She is a woman who can destroy a lion." Yet she failed. The army was defeated, the elephant-drivers killed, and Nur Jahan was carried down the river. Meanwhile the rebel nearly succeeded in turning the now weak-minded emperor against his wife. He went to the tent in which was Jahangir, drinking from that wonderful wine-cup made out of a single ruby which he always carried with him. Mahabbat then accused Nur Jahan of having brought all the trouble to the country. So when the empress, having escaped the flood, arrived at the camp, she found an order for execution waiting her arrival.

" So be it," she said calmly. " Let me now say farewell to my lord." The request could not well be refused, so Mahabbat Khan knew that his power was broken, for Jahangir was as wax in the hand of Nur Jahan.

Nothing but death itself separated them again. Enfeebled by illness, Jahangir was taken to Kashmir for change of air and scene ; but by then he was a dying man. Nur Jahan and the court brought him back by stages, along the road which Akbar had built on the mountain track from Kashmir to Judia. As they reached the high part of the pass, Jahangir died.

Shah Jahan, his son, succeeded, and Nur Jahan ruled no longer. The new king gave her a suite of rooms in the palace at Lahore so that she might watch over the building of her husband's tomb. If she had died first, assuredly he would have built a memorial worthy of a beloved wife and queen. What magnificence would not Jahangir have lavished upon it! But for Nur Jahan there has been no marble—no whiteness, nor a lamp, nor a rose.

But her memorial is her name. It is graven on the character of the Moslem women of India. Does one light a lamp while the moon is shining? Her name in itself is a light. To the Moslem woman it is a beacon, showing her what a woman can achieve. What has been done can be done again. It is a light which inspires her to look forward rather than to make pilgrimages to a grave.

CHAPTER III

THE MOSLEM WOMAN

WITH regard to the question of education or otherwise, there are grades of difference in illiteracy as well as in the proficiency of the highly-educated Moslem woman. From behind the pardah one can rule a kingdom, as did Nur Jahan ; one can even edit a newspaper ! Also when it is said that a woman cannot read, it does not mean that she is not versed in the Koran. The Koran holds a high place in the Moslem woman's education ; wrapped in an embroidered cloth and resting between the two leaves of a carved stand, it is the symbol of her faith. A teacher comes to cause her to read it. To say that she is taught how to read it would not express the method of instruction, for it is teaching by rote ; " causing to understand " belongs to another class of tuition. A woman learned in her creed, and revered in consequence, can repeat many pages of it without understanding a word, excepting, of course, the ever familiar words " Allah " and " Mohammed." But the teaching of the chapter on woman, her duties and limitations, is expounded and explained as well as enforced.

Islamic law is founded on the Koran. Almost without exception, every regulation respecting women is

objectionable. Those regarding polygamy and divorce are the most heinous. A man is entitled to have four wives ; he may divorce his wife for some trivial offence, or for no cause at all. For these evils there is no redress. Should any amelioration of the law be appealed for, how can it be applied, seeing that the zenana is closed against legal inspection !

Failing the present, what does woman find in the Koran with regard to hope for the future life ? Ah well ! her hope has no sure foundation, it depends upon her holding on to the veil of Lady Fatima—upon whom be mercy !—at the day of judgment. And, may be, if she has never displeased her husband they may meet in Firdaus. Never a quarrel ! What a counsel of perfection ! She may think of Nur Jahan at one with her lord ; and of Mumtaz Mahal, in whose memory her husband built the “ Taj,” and who used to sit in the Jasmine Tower keeping watch over it until he died. “ Beshakk ! ” Certainly there were these, but it is given to few to be an empress or even to be the queen of her husband’s heart. Moreover, in heaven there are others ; there is no mention in the Koran of a wife living in heaven with her husband. Yes, there is the Taj and there is the Jasmine Tower ; but in the Palace of the Kings was also the “ Oubliette,” gruesome as in all mediæval castles, East or West. A more cruel form of punishment could not be devised, for without a word, or opportunity for explanation, the doomed wife was hurried through the dismal passages to the door of the death-trap. Ostensibly a turret room, in reality a well, the floor of the tower was the surface of the river. So while the River Jamna reflects the whiteness of the memorial to the beloved woman, it has received hundreds of others, each condemned, cast away, by

her husband. This custom obtained during the comparatively enlightened period of the first Moghul empire. The Koran sanctions it, for is not a woman the chattel of her husband? Yet the Koran holds its place for ever in the woman's heart.

The book, the rosary, the prayer carpet, are the expression of her faith and the accessories of her religion; the Prophet himself the embodiment of her creed. Intermingled with them are the superstitions which, as in a Hindu home, fill her subconscious mind. The evil eye and others have full scope for their terrorism. And has not the Moslem woman cause for fear? The Moslem religion is stern and exacting; it demands all the man's strength in life and death. Who can look forward with assurance to the end of life if he stops to realize the condition of the soul after death as described by Mohammed? It is believed that as soon as the funeral party has proceeded forty paces from the grave, two black angels visit the dead, make him sit up, and examine him as to his faith in God and in Mohammed as His prophet. If he can give a satisfactory answer, he will be told to sleep in peace; if he knows nothing of "God's Prophet" he will be struck with an iron hammer. His cries are heard by all animals near the grave, men and genii excepted.

There is just cause for fear, hence the custom of wearing charms and amulets. And does not fear account for the bedrock of fatalism which underlies the eastern mind—Hindu and Moslem? The fatalism which says: "It is written on my forehead; it cannot be altered," leaves no room for questioning. It acquiesces dumbly. It is as if the perplexed soul, seeing no way out, gives up trying to understand, and like a captive bird, weary of beating its wings against

the bars, folds them over its palpitating heart, and creeping far back into the corner of its cage—waits.

In order to give a general idea of what life is like in a Mohammedan home, it is the best plan to call at a house where strict *pardah* is observed. To call is a matter of formality. One does not “drop in!” There is in an ordinary house a small outer court where we knock and wait until a servant, usually an old woman, opens the door a little way. Then we say: “Will you please to say: ‘Peace’ to the ladies?” Presently she comes back saying: “They say ‘Peace.’” After that we go in.

The ladies within are more or less rich, and have little to do. They welcome a visitor, they like to know what is going on in the outside world. Their daily newspaper is the trusted servant who does the shopping. She brings a lot of gossip from the bazaar, for much can be seen from the “grille” of the long garment, called a *bourka*, which covers her from top to toe.

In the strictest of *pardah* houses, the ladies are not allowed to attend the Friday services at the mosque, although, as in the Jewish synagogue, there is a court set apart for women. A Moslem woman once said: “I was carried in a bride. I shall be carried out dead.”

If the women in a home of this description cannot read, their life is of exceeding dullness. There is nothing to fill it but gossip about trivial affairs at best; there are disappointments, disagreements, and, at worst, quarrels and bitterness. There are many occasions of offence among a group of women and children of all ages who can rarely get rid of each other, even at night.

Then there is no outlook ! The women's part of the house has no outside windows. The doors which serve as windows open into the veranda which surrounds the inner court. The roof is protected by a battlement made of perforated brick, from which a glorious view of the plain can be seen. We were talking of snow one day. No one had seen it. " But surely you must have seen the white ranges of the Himalayas from the roof ! " ' You must remember,' said the head lady, " that we go on the roof only at night, and never on a moonlight night."

And yet in daily life, however sad or difficult, there are joys. There are the pleasures of household matters : cooking, new clothes for the children or for a wedding, a feast day, the new baby. The forty days' fast, sickness, death—these belong to the shadows and can be pushed back for a while. There are always young people in the zenana, and the brightness of the stout heart of youth is infectious. As the limit of marriageable age is higher among Moslems than among Hindus, there is a short space of girlhood, and in good conditions it can be a merry time, comparatively speaking. Many can recall the vision of a pretty maiden, well cared for, well beloved, her hair closely braided into a web on each side of the face. It will be done like this until marriage, when it will be loosened in front. The braiding of the hair is done, usually once a week, by an expert. It is never undone at night, but lasts fairly tidy for days. Jewels are fastened in the hair and round the rim of the ears. A stud, called a clove because of its shape, is screwed into the left nostril. There is no question* of laying the poor head on a pillow with all this encumbrance ; a small head bolster is put under the

nape of the neck. As in a Hindu house, there is no time fixed for going to bed. One of the bedsteads leaning against the wall is let down, and when sleep comes our little friend lies down just as she is, fully dressed, and wraps a quilt around her, over her head and all !

At sunrise the head lady prepares the first meal. Kashmiri tea soon flows out of the samovar ; buffalo's milk added turns it pink ; a biscuit is crumbled into each basin, as the family gathers round the cooking-place.

Presently an old woman joins the party. Her hair is dyed red with henna ; she wears a large amulet of jade over her chest. They call her "Hajan," for she has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Two little girls, each with a copy of the Koran on a stand, sit at her feet. The teacher says : "*Bismillah, Rahman o Rahim,*" and in the name of God the compassionate, the merciful, they repeat after her the hard sayings of the book. In the middle of the lesson a woman arrives selling calico ; a servant, bringing meat and vegetables for the midday meal, comes in from the market. The house mother examines the calico and merchandise, counts the change, and never fails to remark that the purchase might have cost less. Then a servant or relative—of whom there are many present—grinds the spices and helps to knead the dough for the flat unleavened cakes of bread.

Midday is the time for prayer. All stand up, rosary in hand, facing Mecca-wards, bend and prostrate themselves on the ground. During the hot season now comes the siesta. The afternoon holds little else than spinning and preparing the evening meal. As evening falls, lamps are lit, and the flame

of the fire where the meal is in progress lights up the court ; afterwards night and sleep.

Absolutely uneventful ! A day is marked by simple duties only, a waking and a sleeping. The happiest life for the Moslem woman consists in this unbroken, uneventful quietness. To break the stillness is such a risk that they seldom dare to do it.

The voice from the minaret calls—steadily, insistently, at the appointed hours : “ Prayer is better than sleep.” Counting the hours, repeating prayers, bending towards the Qibla, reading if possible the sacred book, obeying its commands, all this is the religion of the Moslem woman. The windowless rooms, the society of none but her family, sickness, death, such is her life history, her home.

CHAPTER IV

GUL ANARI

IT is many years since the happenings in Gul Anari's life took place, so her story may be given without reserve.

Pomegranate Flower was a beautiful girl of about fifteen when we first met. She was an only daughter among several brothers, and the light of her father's eyes. Her mother was at that time elderly. The family consisted of Jasmine Begam—a widowed aunt, the wife of one of the sons, and several children. No account need be taken of the men-folk, as they lived in the *mardana*, or men's part of the house. The zenana and mardana form the two halves of a Moslem building. Two separate stairways lead up to the two divisions of rooms and roofs.

Every one knew that Shah Mohammed Sahib, the head of the house, was a good man. The happy faces of both Gul Anari and her mother bore witness to it. They constantly spoke of his goodness, and who should know so well as they?

The family was of Kashmiri descent. This accounted for a singularly charming type of colouring and feature. Anari was a quick pupil. She learned to read, and took an intelligent interest in things other than those of the zenana. She went up to the roof,

and looked out to the round circle of the plain and the lines of the distant hills. Her father did not forbid her going on a moonlight night nor even during daylight ; but for religion and custom he would have been still more indulgent.

One day I found the household in a state of great excitement ; several strangers—women of course—had arrived. There were large bundles of clothing piled up at one end of the court ; Jasmine Begam was undoing one of them. As the bundles were opened, every one exclaimed, for surely never before had such garments been seen out of Babylon. There were silks of Bokhara, gold-threaded raiment, pearls, and gold and silver embroidered slippers. And the colours ! Not one article of a set of clothing was like another ; rather did it strive to outdo in splendour the coat or the veil that should be worn with it. Of blue and purple, scarlet, crimson, and green, covered with gold or silver, were the radiant suits of coats and vests and loose divided skirts.

Jasmine Begam was the centre of this magnificence and chatter. Anari was sitting apart. There was no need to ask any question, for, of course, it was the wedding trousseau. She was about seventeen, quite old for a Moslem bride, but being the light of his eyes, her father would not allow her to be taken away sooner than need be ; now he could keep her back no longer. We sat together while the others admired the costly array. There was nothing to say, as neither of us knew the bridegroom, yet in our hearts we were both assured that a father like Shah Mohammed Sahib would be careful in the choice of a husband for his child. But as I was going away she came as far as the first doorway and whispered : “ I am afraid.”

As among Hindus, a Moslem betrothal is a family arrangement ; the two people who are chiefly concerned have no say in it. Since it is considered improper for a bride to look happy, she is kept for four days in a starving condition. The treatment has the desired effect ; the poor creature looks miserable, and no doubt that is exactly what she feels.

The wedding takes place during the night. A few hours before the ceremony, the bride is dressed in red and gold wedding garments and covered with a gold-spangled veil, the bridegroom's gift.

This is how Gul Anari appeared on the evening of the wedding. The zenana was filled to overflowing with gaily dressed women-folk. It was no easy matter to force a way to the upper room where the bride was. One of the guests took a lamp in her hand to lighten the dark staircase. As she leaned over the balcony the flame lit up her jewels and eyes. It seemed unreal as a journey to Baghdad might be, but this was one of the Arabian nights.

The room was reached at last. It was packed with relatives and guests, each one striving to sit nearest the bride. Poor Anari ! Her bridal dress was of silk, red as the pomegranate flower, her veil heavy with gold, her face was plastered with gold leaf. There was little to be seen of her but gold and pearls. Her eyes were not loaded with anything, but, of course, they were cast down as becomes a bride who has a hundred eyes upon her night and day. She has to bear the vigilant scrutiny of relatives and relatives-in-law, and she must listen to the most personal remarks. " How beautiful ! " " How modest ! " " See how she droops her eyelids ! " " How delicate ! " " A puff of wind would blow her away ! " " Look at her hands !

They are like flakes of cotton-wool ready for spinning ! ”

She looked at me for a moment. Poor child ! Her eyes were full of tears ; it was only natural, she was tired out, but it was sad.

Yet how unnecessary this sadness was ! If Anari Begam could have known it, she had nothing to fear in her new home. Her husband was of the modern type of progressive men whose influence was beginning to make itself felt even in those early days. He wished his wife to continue her education and Bible study. “ There is no moral teaching equal to it in any other religious book,” he told her.

It was a pleasure to see Gul Anari’s happiness in her married life. If only it had not been for so short a time. One morning two Moslem women of the servant class appeared ; they were clad in dirty garments, for no self-respecting woman wears clean clothes in public. They had not come on a visit, but to bring a message. “ Gul Anari Begam is at her father’s house ; should her friend wish to see her, will she come at once ? ”

That was all. I did not understand the full meaning of the idiom, and so was unprepared for what awaited me. The narrow lane leading to the house was crowded with men—relatives evidently. The house was filled with women, just as it was at the wedding, but instead of bright colours they were clothed in mourning garments.

The poor mother was sitting as far back in a dark corner as the crowding permitted ; the aunt Jasmine Begam came forward and led me through the throng to a side room in the court. Still never a word ! There was not time to say anything, but by now there

was no mistaking what it all meant Yet it was so sudden ! It seemed as yesterday when the jewelled lady with the lamp led me up to the bride in scarlet and gold.

The crowd made way. The stone floor was flooded with water. In the midst, on a low bedstead, Gul Anari.

Ever afterwards I have carried the picture of a marble figure lying on a tomb in some dark nook of a cathedral. What I saw was so white, so still ; the linen folded around as a sculptor folds the marble on arm and shoulder. In the curve of the arm lay the little child. It was a beautiful thought to send for me before the terrible swathing of the dead took place—the laying on the bier and the carrying forth—while mourners wailed and beat their breasts.

Later on I might see the marble slab with the niche for the lamp facing towards the Kaaba. On Thursday evening the lamp would be lit in perpetual remembrance of the *marhum*, of Gul Anari, who had “received mercy.” The angels would assuredly deal gently with her and “bid her rest in peace until the Judgment Day.”

After the mourning days had ended I ventured to ask if there was no message, no last word. “No ! never a word ! It was destiny ; there was a stopping of the breath ; she passed out.”

Jasmine Begam said nothing. She was looking frail and aged. When I rose to go, she came with me towards the outer court, as Gul Anari had done not so long ago. “I will tell you her last words,” she whispered. Her voice was so low that I had to bend down. “I heard her say : ‘ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ’ ”

CHAPTER V

IN THE STREETS AND LANES OF THE CITY

THE lane is dominated by Khair-ud-din's mosque. The Moorish cupolas, minarets, and courts are familiar in picture, but not the radiance of air and sky which glorify the stucco walls and make them live. Light reflected or transmitted produces an optical delusion. In a red sunset the minarets seem gem-like, as if the rose flushed from within. On the lower cornice fall shadows of the blue pigeons of Shiraz that dwell in the courts.

The moonlight traces the outlines in black and silver. The watch-fire flaring up on a dark night suddenly reveals a white pillar in the gloom. One of the minarets is inlaid with blue tiles, each a separate study in the dark and light blue. Seen against the blue of noon it appears a transparency, and yet in detail the mosque is old and soiled. Such is the magic of atmosphere and the glamour of the East.

The narrow passage between the low houses which surround the mosque is thronged by fakirs from dawn till dusk. Some utter harsh cries ; a few, in musical notes of voice or instrument, mark the hours. One knows the time of day by the various calls. The muezzin calls the hour for prayer from the minaret. His voice is of a wonderful quality and tone. It is a

bell-note, but his co-religionists do not describe it so. If an official choir notice existed it would run : " The muezzin crows at such an hour." After all, it is an expressive phrase and places the position as well. He stands and crows just like a cock.

It is Friday ; the call of the muezzin is responded to publicly by the men who crowd into the open court of the mosque, and by a few women in bourkas who glide in by a side door to their appointed court. A volume of sound rises like the roar of the sea, other voices as waves singly in the streets, and the murmur inaudible from the hidden world of Moslem women behind the veil. The time of day is noon.

That door in the bend of the lane opens into the courtyard of a house where there is always a welcome. It is almost too hot to knock upon to-day. A wasp playing about seems to enjoy it, and gaily dangles his shadow, as sharp as himself, on the shrinking boards. " Come in ! Bismillah ! You seem to have forgotten the way to our house ! "

The mother-in-law has finished cooking. Her daughter-in-law has made the bread. The cakes are piled in a heap in a flat basket, and covered with a dusty cloth which is kept for this especial use. It has never been washed. Behind the group is another woman smoking the hubble-bubble. Her veil is like the bread cover, of a grey colour. Constant washing wears out clothing, and when one is poor this is a consideration. Besides, being so poor, one has to go out shopping, so of what use are clean clothes ? " Let thy garments be always white " is a commandment given to men. " *Safed posh* "—that is, " a man dressed in white "—is a title given to a clerk or teacher, and implies that he is not of the labouring class. As

women go out of doors only of necessity, the better class, who wear clean clothing, do not appear in the streets of the city.

The friends who so cordially invited me, although it was almost dinner time, were very poor. They were compelled to wear dingy and sordid clothing, and therefore their heart craved for bright colours.

"If we were birds we should be born beautifully dressed," was the surprising remark of an elderly woman, almost blind. "Wah! wah! Aunt! and what sort of bird would you wish to be?"

Two young girls from the next house had joined the party. Neighbours have a way of slipping down by a ladder over the low wall that separates house from house; especially do they come when they see a visitor.

"A parrot!" The old lady rapped the bird out rather crossly—she disliked being laughed at. "I like the colour," she added more graciously. "Parrot-green is beautiful; it is the colour of the mantle of the Prophet." One of the girls was looking at the minaret which towered above the courtyard, the blue of its surface almost invisible against the blue of the sky. "I would choose the heavenly colour," she said. The shade that is like the sky at noon is so called. The word "blue" is applied to the darkest shade, almost black, like the heavens at night. There was little hope of their desire for brightness being fulfilled, unless at a wedding, and even then they could not afford the soft silks which women love.

Their lot was a hard one. The men folk were carpet-weavers working on scarcely a living wage; that is, except the husband of the lady of the bread basket, who had become a fakir. He was lazy and

wished to eat without working. It was nothing to him if his wife had no food. She earned a few pence by spinning.

She suddenly covered her face—a sign that her father-in-law and the others had come for their meal, so I went out into the lane once more.

Farther down, it turns into a tortuous alley between high houses. It is so narrow that the balconies above almost meet; it is dark, for the sunshine seldom penetrates it. In one of the doorways an old woman is spinning the soft Himalayan goats' hair which is woven into that stuff of wondrous softness called *pashmina*. Shawls are made of it, and princely raiment. The tufts of down are so fine that they are dipped in flour to give them consistency before spinning. There was nothing in the ante-room but the spinning-wheel and a small pot of flour for the wool; nothing much in the inner room, simply an old bedstead, a flat iron plate by the cooking-place, and a crock with enough of flour in it to make two cakes.

Jan Begam was a widow, her son was dead. She earned just enough to keep alive, by spinning the fine yarn that made soft clothing. Her thin, wrinkled face had a well-bred air; it must have been comely once upon a time.

The mosque was not visible, but one could hear the cries of the fakir brotherhood that infested the end of the lane. After a plentiful dinner, they had separated, and were now drifting through the city, begging from door to door for their meal of the evening. One of them had turned into the alley, and stopped in front of us. Jan Begam drew the veil over her old face; it was not custom merely, it had become an almost unconscious gesture. I looked at the coarse,

well-fed face, the saffron robe, the alms wallet, the greedy, clutching hands. He had not spoken, evidently, expecting that his presence was sufficient to produce food.

Jan Begam seemed to hesitate, ever so little, so he said impatiently: "Bread! give me bread." At once she rose, and from the crock in the inner room, brought a handful of flour—half of all she possessed. He allowed her to put it into his wallet, already well filled, and passed on to the next house, calling as he went: "Bread! give me bread, in the name of God!"

Jan Begam understood the grief and indignation that I did not know how to utter. "He would have cursed me, so it was better to give. *Ho jane!* (Let it be)," and she began spinning more swiftly to make up for lost time. "But, *mai ji!* (honoured mother), a curse causeless cannot come." "It does, it does, you don't understand; besides, is it not written on the 'night of record'?"

The Prophet had said that on that night God writes down all the actions that mankind are to perform during the year, also the names of those who are to be born or to die.

A few doors away, and up a steep stair, lived some one who was then in great sorrow. I had known her in happier times, when things went well with her. She had always a bright word to say to a friend, never a grumble, not even during an attack of fever. "But there is nothing to complain of," she would say. "No, we have no children, but I am the one wife of my husband, and I ask for no greater joy."

Now things went ill. She was set aside, and another reigned in her stead. This was not illegal, for the Koran sanctions polygamy, but it was unlawful in

this, that her husband had taken all the money that had been her private property before marriage and left her without any allowance.

Fatima was sitting alone in a room that looked out over the roof, and beyond the sea of roofs and temples of the city, the mosque near by overshadowing, overpowering. She seemed to be reciting something, but she was just muttering to herself almost unconsciously.

Whenever I read the imprecations of Psalm cix. her suffering face looks into mine ; as a picture of sheer agony I have seen nothing like it since. Not a hint of submission, or sacrifice for love, no appeal in the expression—merely anger, revenge, overwhelming grief ; a very strong animal when wounded looks like that. Her voice was a cry of pain. "Let the east wind scorch her field, and let grief clothe her as with a garment ! O Allah ! keep me, and make my enemy lick the dust ! Let the extortioner ruin her ; let none extend mercy."

She hardly saw me, so I sat down beside her on the ground, speaking no word, for her grief was very great. "My heart is wounded within me. . . ." She went on, as if complaining to me. "I am dried like chaff. Help me, O God." What she said was, as it seemed to me at the time, almost verbatim with the text of the psalm, so I have put her disjointed plaint and prayer as if they had been quotation ; no other translation could convey the language of her sorrowful heart so well.

During the time of strain, she would come to see me, but only for a few minutes at a time ; her restless soul could not be still.

"The mountains lie heavy upon my head," she would say ; then after sitting for a while in silence she

would rise and, drawing her bourka over her face, go out into the lane—back to her loneliness. I can see the solitary figure still, shuffling along in the heelless slippers, wrapping the folds of her garment round her as if in protection against the winds of desolation.

It may be a digression, but as it is so eastern, so typical, I must add that my poor friend found consolation in a dream. In the vision of her head she found herself in the courtyard of her home once more. On the wall before her was a gourd, on which were two pumpkins, one large and one small. Standing before the plant was the gardener (or was it her husband? she could not tell), and some one unknown—a watcher may be. Said the watcher: "Pluck off the little one, but let the big one remain, for it was there first." So on this she stilled her soul and waited. I have reason to believe that it was not in vain.

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"Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city." Quickly, for they are filled with the poor, the sick, the sorrowful, the bitter of soul. Day brings toil, weariness, a few joys, many griefs. After the day comes the night, stars, darkness, but with never an hour of stillness. The clamour of the city never ceases; it is like the cry of a sick child which is restless even in sleep.

CHAPTER VI

THE DESERT FAITH: AN IMPRESSION

I am alone in a wide desert
Listening to the echo of strange voices.

—*Said-ud-din Mahmud Sabistari*

INDIA is a land of villages and small towns ; there are few large cities.

As far as the eye can reach, all round the horizon, there are villages set flatly down among the flat fields. The group of houses, the well, the pond, the pipal tree, form the unit to be reckoned with *ad infinitum*. Farther away they appear as mounds becoming more blue and faint until they seem as a dot on the horizon. . . . Over the blue line there are more, hundreds of miles of wheat fields and villages, until they merge into the forests, the gardens of fruit trees, and thatched cottages of the southern provinces.

Each village is a centre of cultivation. The fields of wheat and maize around them have made the wilderness glad. But the cultivation is maintained at a cost. The villager toils night and day at the well, when the canal water is not available, to keep his crops alive. At the point where the water ceases, the waste begins, where the saltpetre sprinkles the land as if with snow.

The villager lives by the sweat of his brow. He is a man of toil, and so he has become one of the finest specimens of manhood in India. Thus it is in the

country that one finds the Hindu and Sikh woman at her best. She breathes a pure air, and has a greater freedom than in the cities. She carries her husband's food to the well, she walks by the wheat over a vast land under a wide sky. In this atmosphere is to be found the soul of India, and one is more at home among her children than in a town.

But not so the Moslem woman. The Moslem is not an agriculturalist like the Sikh or Hindu. His crops are poor in comparison with theirs, his home more sordid. A Moslem village can be distinguished easily by its appearance. Muzaffarpur is not typical of an average village—it is rather one of the poorest, because it came into being through great sorrow. A few date palms stood near by, but there was not a tree or even a bush to cast any shade over it, for it was but lately founded. The inhabitants had come to get rid of death. The Angel of Death had entered their former village so often that they left it, thinking to outwit him in this way. Yet when Gulab Shah, the fakir, would come singing the song of death they would listen with pleasure. It was a message of despair, but that was all they could look for.

Should "Azrael" come again, as most surely he would—*he who never forgets*—they would receive him, for is not the hour of his death written on a man's forehead at birth? The Moslem woman will shrug her shoulders and say: "*Ih jag mitha—age kan ditta* (this world is sweet—the other, who has seen it?)" This world is sweet! She looks at you as if to say: "Is not the irony apparent?" Mahtab Bibi, haggard, hard of countenance, looks an old woman, yet she is only thirty. Her daughter is married. She had two sons, but they died. That is why they had helped

build the new village ; of course death would find them out in time, but "*Ho jane !* (Let it be, nothing matters now)." Her clothing was of a dingy red and blue. Her harsh hair, well-oiled, was drawn tightly back to the silver knob on her head—the veil hanging over. Her ears, over-weighted by many heavy rings of silver, doubled over and lay down on her cheek. The rims were torn in places ; a new hole having been made for each ring. A talisman with Arabic lettering lay on her heart to keep sorrow away. In her busy life, Mahtab had little time for thought either of sorrow or death. The burden of her toil weighed so heavily that she had become almost like the buffaloes in the yard. That is what her husband called her—"an animal." "What is the use of talking to an animal ?" he would say. All he asked was to have his food ready when he came back from the field.

Mahtab Bibi had no illusions left, no hope ; that was why she loved the song of death. The hopeless words were exactly what she could understand ; and was there not some comfort in the thought that from the door of the grave was no returning ? She would have nothing to return to—no love—no rest—no home. The Moslem Indian woman does not belong to the village life like her Hindu sister. One thinks of her as leading the more artificial life of the city, behind the high walls and the shut door ; and yet she belongs to a desert faith.

It was while passing through the sandy waste, white with saltpetre, literally sown with salt, that I met one of these figures so typical of the religion of the Prophet. It was Gulab Shah, the fakir. He was playing upon the musical instrument, and doubtless singing the very words, with which he had comforted the death-fearing

inhabitants of Muzaffarpur ; now he was wending his way homewards.

His home was called by an eastern name which means a pillow. It may therefore be described as a place of rest for one person. It was only a small hut, but it was built on a platform of mud which lent it distinction, for this proclaimed it to be the place of a holy man. It might even have a future. It might become a place of pilgrimage, should the saint earn a halo by wonderful cures effected after his death, or prophecies fulfilled during his lifetime.

Gulab Shah may have earned repute after this manner, but the gift that lay to hand, so to speak, was the power of calling forth the voices of the wind and of the sorrowful heart of the East from an instrument of his own fashioning.

The instrument, which in short we may call a violin, was made in this way. First of all he would choose a large yellow gourd, then he would scoop it hollow, and hang it upon the wall to dry. A keyboard would then be fastened on and strings laid across. The bow consisted of horsehair tied to a rough piece of wood. It was a weak and peculiar instrument, but it lay in the hand of a master. It charmed the people of the villages ; it gave me a message later on.

The harvest of the great northern plain had been reaped. The seed was falling from the winnowing fans on to the threshing-floor. The chaff was whirling in the dust-laden air.

There was a musical festival in the village that night, for drums were throbbing fitfully. They would beat steadily later on, and there would be singing. The feast would continue till early morning, it was said.

From farther out on the plain came a sound, a

minor ascent and descent, as a wave flows and ebbs out again. It was the sound of words such as these, with the refrain, recurring again, insistent and inevitable as the tide in its ebb and flow :—

The foe is remembered, the friend is forgotten,
As dreams in the night their forms pass before me.
The foe is remembered.

From the door of the grave no traveller returneth,
One by one they are passing before me
To the door of the grave.

The dust to its dust ! The young, the light-hearted.
Ashes to ashes ! The flowers fade before me
The dust to its dust.

Lost far in the desert, the caravans departed,
As foam on the waters, passing before me,
Lost far in the desert.

Nor Suhrab the strong one, nor Rustam stout-hearted ;
The grave has devoured all the heroes before me,
Nor Suhrab the strong one.

To dust and to ashes ! The strong and brave-hearted
In the sure mills of destiny ground down before me
To dust and to ashes.

Ashes to ashes : silence, and the great plain. How fitly did the sound echo the wind, interpret the silence ! It was a message of despair : I hear it still. The long notes were like the wind on the wheat, which passes only to return again ; for as the age of the wind and of grief is the age of an eastern song. The singer is but of yesterday ; the burden of his song leaves an echo for ever.

Said the Moslem : “ I am alone in a wide desert listening to the echo.”

The spirit of the desert, like its faith, seeking rest and finding none.

SECTION III

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN

CHAPTER I

(i) THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND

THE amazing thing about Christianity is its simplicity. When a convert is brought into the Church, whether from the bleakness of Islam or from the luxuriance of Hinduism, it seems so natural for him to be a Christian. One might fear the transition period, but there is none ; there is no interval between the door and the home within. It is as if a child seeking in the dark finds not a stranger, but its mother. This accounts for the rapid growth and wonderful adaptability of the new convert.

There are exceptions. There are disappointments, a falling away after a time ; but such cases can usually be traced to a want of sincerity, or to wrong motives on the part of the would-be converts. There are also grievous instances of falling from grace among the members of the Church.

It would, moreover, be untrue to give the impression that there are no faults in character and no difficulties in the lives of the true disciples of the faith. The Church has always the names of Euodias and Syntyche on the roll of believers, and never during all the time of her history have Euodias and Syntyche been of one mind.

But such difficulties are not greater in the Church

that is in India than in the Church that was in Philippi—nor are the saints of the West in need of less patience than are the saints of the East. The Church universal confronts one enemy.

With regard to the Church in India, it is wonderful that difficulties are not greater than they are, seeing that the cause for difference of opinion and disagreement is greater than in the West. In one congregation there are not many who have come out from the same caste or belief.

It would be possible to give a picture of difficulties, but, as in the Hindu and Moslem sections, the leaders of thought in the Christian Church have been chosen from the ideal, and the scenes of home life have been taken from an average home at its best. There has been no intention in any of the sketches—Hindu, Moslem, or Christian—to represent perfection, nor do they aim at the exhaustive information of a report. Such as they are, they are taken from life, individually, as a watercolour; not as a photograph, which, although painfully accurate, so often fails to recall the expression on the face of a friend.

(ii) WHEN THE CALL COMES

“And when Thyself with Shining Foot shall pass.”—*Omar Khayyam*

As Mary at dawn by the grave broken-hearted,
I mourn in the shadows the dead gone before me,
As Mary at dawning.

Then Jesus Himself comes to me the sad-hearted,
And sorrow and sighing pass as clouds from before me
When Jesus Himself comes.

SONG in the East, unless debased and put to evil uses, is of a religious nature. It is an outward expression of the longing of the soul for God, or simply “its cry in the night.” The soul, that beggar maid, before realizing to whom it cries, utters its dirge in the desert, its cry of loneliness.

This is why the song in the desert is sad. The singer has no hope as he travels onwards to “the door of the grave.” If it were not for the assurance that He Who sought Mary has never ceased to seek and to find, how unbearably sad it would be!

Is it for nothing that the seeking soul of India is usually represented as a woman: the woman who is sad, and who is for ever seeking, seeking for something, for some one? The Lord Himself came and sought and asked her: “Why weepest thou?” He would have her tell Him quite simply what it is that grieves her. And He has done so, not only at that time, but from the beginning until now. Who but the divine grace Himself taught Rabia that even repentance—the turning to God—comes from God to man, and not from man to God. “I have committed many sins,” said some one, “and if I turn in penitence to God, will He turn in mercy towards me?” “Nay,” said

Rabia, "but if He should turn towards thee thou wilt turn towards Him."

Did He turn towards Rabia? Surely none but the satisfied soul could say: "O God! Whatever share of this world Thou hast allotted to me, bestow it on mine enemies: and whatever share of the next world Thou hast allotted to me, bestow it on my friends. *Thou art enough for me.*"

The human sympathy of the Lord Jesus has attracted many souls from all creeds, even from the creed of Islam which excludes Him inasmuch as it denies His divinity. They regard Him as the living Lord. Said a Moslem woman in prayer: "Lord Jesus, I am a suffering woman, my foot has been very sore all night. Bind it up with Thine own hands to-day. Amen." How could she have prayed thus unless He had drawn near and said: "Woman, why weepest thou?" He is the same, yesterday, to-day, every day. Now, as then, He seeks and He calls.

He calls again, more urgently, by name: "Mary." In these last days in India He has been calling, one by one, by name. At first they stood alone—each one following all alone with Him only, but as they obeyed His command: "Go and tell My brethren," others joined the company, singly—then in families, until we see in the mass movement a nation pressing towards the door of the Church.

And who are these who have come? From divers creeds, Hindu, Moslem, Sikh. From every kindred and nation, high and low, learned and ignorant. Some out of great tribulation; for others it was just a passing out from darkness towards the day. And as each little stream brings the colour of the rock from which it comes to the river into which it flows, the river is

enriched. So the river of life receives and blesses each for the good of all.

In the stories of individual lives which follow, we shall find how God called each one by name. He found them in strange places. He led them by different ways. He had especial work for each to do. The pilgrim becomes in His hands the founder of a home ; the ascetic becomes an evangelist ; the poet, an inspiration ; the sensitive plant, the stay of the home ; the " little one of the village," the light in a dark place.

The Pandita Ramabai, because of her completeness, leads in the van of the goodly fellowship of those who serve. She touches the circle of opportunity at all points. Those who come after are of that elect order to whom is allotted an especial work, a sphere which they alone can influence.

CHAPTER II

PANDITA RAMABAI

I had gone a begging from door to door in the village path, when Thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream, and I wondered Who was this King of all kings! My hopes rose high, and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked, and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and Thou camest down with a smile. I felt the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden Thou didst hold out Thy right hand and say: "What hast thou to give Me?"

Ah! What a kingly jest it was to open Thy hand to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to Thee.

But how great was my surprise, when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor, to find the least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept, and wished that I had had the heart to give Thee my all.—*Rabindranath Tagore*

WE find the keynote of Pandita Ramabai's life and service in the message she sent to friends and co-workers in America during the early stages of her work in India: "Remind them that it was out of Nazareth that the blessed Redeemer of mankind came; that great reforms have again and again been wrought by instrumentalities that the world despised. Ask them to help me to educate the high caste child widow; for I solemnly believe that this hated and despised class of women, educated and enlightened, are by God's grace to redeem India."

God chooses and prepares His instruments for the work which He has prepared for them to do. The preparation for Ramabai's lifework began before her birth. Her father, a learned Brahman, was one of the pioneers who had enlightened and advanced theories about the education of women. He was, moreover, not merely a theorist, but a doer of the word. He had courage, for he began operations in his own house, by teaching his little wife of nine years to read. This was an innovation indeed ! It could not be tolerated. His people were indignant ; they protested, resisted, and finally made the position impossible for him. Many a reformer has succumbed under domestic tyranny, but the pandit stood firm. He departed into the forest. There he made a home for his wife, where he could teach her in peace—that is, so far as the tigers would permit.

Ramabai was born in this forest home in the Western Ghats on 23 April, 1858. She had a noble heritage from both parents, for her father was a man of high ideals and courage, and her mother was not only gentle and devoted, but one who could teach her from books and nature ; so the jungle which might have shut her in became a source of inspiration.

While she was still a child, her father travelled about the country with his family, giving lectures upon the necessity for the uplift and improvement of the conditions of the women of India. That he should displease his people still further was a foregone conclusion ; for not only did he practise what he preached, but he refused to give his daughter in marriage when she reached the age of nine years. This was beyond endurance, and they gave him up altogether. The wandering life did not hinder Ramabai's education.

She could now speak in four languages, and had learned Sanskrit.

Then came the great famine of 1877, the incredible suffering of her family, and the death of her parents. The story is unique for sadness, even in the annals of India. Her father had, as far as he could, served God with all his heart during life, and, dying, committed his beloved daughter to His care : " I have given you into the hands of God. You must serve Him all your life."

After many years of faithful service, his daughter says : " My father's prayers were heard by the heavenly Father Whom the old Hindu did not know, and I can now say to the departed spirit : ' Yes, dear father, I will serve the only true God to the last.' "

It was at the river that his mantle fell upon her. After her father's death her time of service began. Ramabai and her brother continued his mission in aid of the oppressed. Her lectures became famous : the echo of them spread far and wide till it reached the ear of the learned pandits of Calcutta. They commanded her presence at the forum. There she lectured so eloquently that she had the highest title conferred upon her, and was known henceforth as the Pandita Ramabai.

The wandering life continued, but it was not spent in vain. She met the reformer Keshab Chandra Sen, and read his books about other religions. An inevitable undermining of her faith in Hinduism took place, not merely because of further enlightenment, but from what she saw of its effects. The selfishness of the Brahmans, and their deceitful practices of so-called miracles at shrines, revolted her. Nevertheless, she worshipped idols until she was twenty.

But a further cleavage was soon to take place. Being Brahmans, the Pandita and her brother saw much of the inner life of high caste Hinduism. Having experienced only the happiness of home relationships, it was a shock to her to find misery, revolt, and torture—the terrible details of the life of the child wife, and especially of the child widow.

At that time was sown the seed of her special work, the practical outcome of her mission as lecturer. The call to save her sisters dates from this period. Now comes a break.

Immediately after this, followed her brother's death and her utter loneliness; her happy marriage, the birth of her little daughter Mano, and the sudden death of her husband.

How strange it seemed! Just when her wanderings were ended and the hope of her life fulfilled. Her husband, Bipan Bihari Medhari, had entered into her desire for service with great sympathy, and they had planned to have a little school for child widows in their own home; and now it was at an end.

Not at all. It was just the beginning. God was preparing His instrument still further. He was drawing Ramabai nearer to Himself. The influence of Father Goreh at that time was bringing her nearer to the Cross.

Meanwhile, Pandita Ramabai was steadily preparing for her work. Her heart became all the more drawn towards it now that she herself knew what it was to be a widow. She brought all her powers of mind to bear upon it; she let slip no opportunity. Her evidence before the Indian Education Committee, in 1882, made her famous. The plans she submitted were adopted. A year later she went to England for

further training, and was received by the Community of St. Mary's Home, at Wantage, and there she and her daughter were baptized.

The post of professor of Sanskrit in the Women's College, Cheltenham, was offered her. She found time, however, to continue her own education, for there she studied English literature, Greek, higher mathematics, and natural science. Not considering this sufficient equipment, the insatiable scholar went to America to continue her preparation for her life's work. It was there that she formulated her plan to establish a secular school for high caste widows, and appealed for the help of men and women of all denominations. Her appeal was responded to, and an American Association formed. The Association pledged itself to support a secular school for high caste widows. It was to be non-religious, but the Bible and the Vedas were to be put side by side in the school library.

After still further lecturing, and study of educational methods, Pandita Ramabai went to India. She landed on 1 February, 1889, and in a few weeks her school was opened in Bombay.

The school was now a fact, the number of pupils two. It was named Sharda Sadan, i.e. home of wisdom. In a year it had justified all expectations in proficiency and in number of pupils. It was soon afterwards removed to Poona, where it prospered exceedingly, until some of her widows decided to be baptized, then it suffered a check. Hinduism and, shall we say, Satan, will let philanthropy alone until it becomes Christianity ; but that must be prevented at all costs.

Ramabai weathered the storm, and soon rejoiced in a multitude of children whom God gave her.

At this point she took a step upward. Ramabai had given herself to the work of God without reserve, but God desired herself as well, not in part but altogether, for He demands all. So Ramabai, who belonged to God, took the further step of utter consecration.

With the terrible famine of 1896-7 came the great opportunity. Ramabai was ready to seize it, but before making any plans of operation she asked a gift from God. She prayed first for the increase of conversions among the widows, and then that more inmates might be sent than she had room for. It would have seemed the natural thing to ask that there might be room enough to receive the poor famine-stricken people. But Ramabai, who never in all her life did anything by halves, did exactly what God commands ; and that is to ask Him for a gift so large that there will not be a room big enough to put it in.

Ramabai herself went to the Central Provinces to fetch the gift. Her family was now increased to about 600 women and children. Her prayer was answered ; a great spiritual blessing—a large number of the women were baptized ; there was no room big enough to receive the new children.

So the work grew and overflowed its borders. In order to house her family, and make it self-supporting as well, a farm near Poona was bought and put under cultivation. It soon became a profitable concern as well as a home, for it supplied not only its own needs, but those of the school. It is called Mukti, and has become a Christian and industrial school where Ramabai prepares her children for happy and useful lives. During the famine of 1900 more orphans arrived, and her family numbered 2000.

It was during that time of stress that the Pandita had the joy of welcoming her daughter as a fellow-worker. Manoramabai, who had graduated with honours, was appointed vice-principal of the Sharda Sadan. How ably she seconded her mother is shown by the success of the school, which is now recognized by the Educational Department of the Government as a high school. But her interest and sympathy embraced the work as a whole. Her aim was to further the Kingdom of God. A Hindu lady who visited the school a few years ago said, as she looked around : " The difference between our work and yours is that we reject unlikely candidates, and take only those who give promise of success. You take the unpromising and produce most astonishing results." Manoramabai, alluding to this, said : " This is quite true. We are not ashamed to say that we work for those who cannot help themselves, and that we depend upon God, Who stooped so low that the world might be redeemed ; He helps us, and by the blessing of His good hand upon us, brings forth out of rough ore costly vessels for the Master's use." Some are working as medical women, Bible women, and teachers ; some are married, but all seek to carry with them the spirit of love ; and yet those who are doing such beautiful work were once despised, needy, and desolate women.

Recently the Pandita Ramabai was awarded the gold Kaisar-i-Hind medal, for public service in India. Not being able to go herself, now being in feeble health, her daughter, Manoramabai, had the pleasure of receiving it for her, and the mother had the greater joy of taking it from the hand of her child.

It is rare that a life-work so rapidly increases in volume, and still continues to do so as the evening of

rest draws near, and that diminution of strength detracts nothing from personal influence. The Pandita's responsibilities were continually increasing because of the nature of her work. The number of child widows and orphans has been fearfully augmented by the years of war and pestilence. Each need as it came was an opportunity for the Pandita; as her family grew and her burdens increased fellow-workers gathered around her.

But, as heretofore in her story, the thread breaks off suddenly, and with what pain! At the beginning of her life death came, and cut the deed off. During the time of her great happiness again it was death—and now, towards the end, death comes and takes away Manoramabai, her dearest and best.

At a crucial time in her life she lost father, husband, and child.

But, as each break of the thread heralded the beginning of another stage of service, this last was but the ushering in of a greater hope and a larger fruition, for Ramabai was not long afterwards called into the immediate Presence. How great must have been her surprise, when at the day's end she found that what she had given to the King had become gold!

CHAPTER III

THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP

(i) A VOICE : TORU DUTT

Born, 1856. Died, 1877

“ Her eager, tender spirit passed to eternal rest firmly relying on her Saviour, Jesus Christ, and in perfect peace.”

OF Toru Dutt, long since dead, what shall we say? There is nothing left unsaid by the world that admired her. Much has been written about the life and doings of Toru: her travels, the famous people she met, her literary achievement, her proficiency in foreign languages, her wide sympathy and power of judgment, her devotion to her country—and all the while still so young, almost a child. When fame came to her she had scarcely time to appraise it; she cannot have realized her powers before she had to arise and go. It is not possible to add anything to the tribute already accorded to her. But there is one thing. In linking her name with those who serve, it may be that her voice may reach some one who otherwise might not have heard; for she is still with us in her literature, so charged is it with the colour and sound of life.

Like the simal trees which splash with colour the pool in her beloved garden: “ Red—red and startling like a trumpet sound,” it is a vital force. The sound

of her voice so startled the world—East and West—that many went out to find her. And what did they see? A frail, sensitive child, a reed shaken by the wind of death. Had she lived, what might not Toru have achieved! Her love for her Saviour would have inspired her so to sing His praise that the music of the Church would have been rich indeed. But as her gift was poured at His feet, it will live for ever.

Is there not a challenge in this brief, bright life? A call to some one to carry on the message of voice and pen? A call the more urgent, the more moving, when she who wielded such a pen had to lay it down so soon. India needs a gift such as this. Some one has said that sympathetic insight in literature will touch her heart while controversy and reason will leave her cold. Will not some daughter of the Church in India listen to the far-away voice and take up the song?

May not her poem, so often quoted, awaken an echo in a wider sense perhaps than she intended? May it not serve as an appeal to those who have a gift to lay before God, and to India, who apart from her Saviour can never fulfil her destiny?

Still barred thy Doors! the far East glows,
The morning wind makes fresh and free!
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?

All look for Thee—Love, Light, and Song—
Light in the sky, deep red above,
Song in the lark of pinions strong,
And in my heart, true love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal,
Why strive to cheat our destinies?
Was not my love made for thy soul,
Thy beauty for mine eyes?

No longer sleep,
Oh, listen now!
I wait and weep,
But where art thou?

(ii) THE EVANGELIST : CHANDRA LELI

THE life of Chandra Leli is a strange record of self-denial and self-torture during the first stage, and an equally wonderful story of self-sacrifice, joyfully rendered, when she became a Christian. Born of a priestly caste, married at seven, she was widowed at nine years old. There her youth ended, for we find her studying Sanskrit with her father for four years, and afterwards going with him on a pilgrimage to Jagannath, where he died. Years of study followed, apparently with the purpose of finding out how the sin which had caused her widowhood might be cleansed. In the sacred books she read an account of four sacred shrines where such cleansing might be obtained, and she resolved to visit them. Now these shrines, called severally Jagannath, Ramnath, Dwarakanath, and Badrnath, form the cardinal points of India, but this was no deterrent. Chandra Leli set out with a faithful servant, and in due course made the round. From the hot plains at Jagannath on and upwards to the snows of the Himalayas at Badrnath ; all this weariness and painfulness gave her no relief of mind or peace of soul. She went to Kashmir, and visited every sacred place ; thence to various holy cities of the plains, and on to Benares, where her servant died. Then followed a quiet interval, when she stayed at a rajah's palace, and taught the lady Sanskrit. A house was set apart for her ; she was worshipped as a saint, and for a while she was satisfied.

But the old unrest returned, and she set out once more as a pilgrim. After a while, finding that fatigue and privation were not sufficient as a means of expiation,

she resolved to undergo bodily torture. She became a sadhni, and sat in dust and ashes between five fires during the hot weather. Many came to worship her ; the rich brought wood and kept the fires burning as their share of merit. During the cold season, she spent the nights standing in a tank with the water up to her neck, counting her rosaries of 108 beads 1000 times. She called upon " Ram," but he gave no heed.

At this point Chandra Leli reached the stage of disillusionment. As did others, she found out the deception practised at miracle shrines, and the untruthfulness of the Hindu priests. Then she lost faith in Hinduism, but still continued its customs. It was during this time of transition that she resolved to go to Calcutta by sea. She believed in nothing, but was still wearing the dress of a sadhni : that is, dusty clothes, mud-plastered feet and hands, and her hair done in ropes, stiffened with grease and mud, coiled on her head.

What an unkempt person to come on board a clean ship ! The captain made her pay extra fare for the mud. During the voyage came a storm, and the Hindu passengers were in a panic and began calling upon Ram.

Amidst the commotion, the captain came on deck and, pointing to heaven, said : " Hush ! He Who lives there will take care of us."

For the first time in all her experience, Chandra Leli recognized God. When the ship reached Calcutta she had come to the end of Hinduism, not only in faith but in practice ; she cut off the mass of coiled hair and threw it into the river. " I have done and suffered all that could be required of a mortal by God or man," she said, " and without avail."

What a long and toilsome way, and with what pain and suffering! But the One Whom she sought had been seeking her, and now it would seem as if He called, and brought her to a standstill. She was undone, despairing; she gave up striving, and He became her Saviour. He sent His servants to fetch her. They came to her, taught her, and she was led into the goodly fellowship of believers.

"Is it for me?" she would say.

"Assuredly it is for you."

"But I am a sinner, I have told lies. . . ."

"Even so, it is for you."

Thus they comforted and reassured her, and so she entered into the Church.

Her remaining years were devoted to God's service. Always a pilgrim, she went from village to village. "Selfless, fearless, and seeking especially after those who, like herself, had been searching for the truth. When too old to travel about, a hut was built for her, at her request, by the roadside. 'Build it close up, so that when I am too weak to walk, I may crawl to the door and speak to the people as they pass by.'"

The ascetic had found at last what she had ignorantly and unavailingly striven after. God had answered, but far above what she had asked. Her life of joyous self-sacrifice far surpasses the eastern ideal, which is purely selfish. A Hindu saint retires to a cave for meditation and contemplation. The Christian ideal is service for God and others. A Christian is ready for any sacrifice if by any means he may save some.

(iii) SUNDER'S MOTHER

It is the custom in India for a man when referring to his wife to say: "My house." Should you wish to make inquiries, the polite form is: "How fares the house of your Honour?" It is a beautiful recognition of the spirit of the relationship, the comfort, the refuge which a building affords, and the wife's staying power which makes it his habitation.

Even when he becomes a Christian the title is retained. The English equivalent is more commonly used, but never does it seem so fitting, so wholly admirable. But, although used by the world in general, to friends the "house" becomes the "child's mother." The particular "house" referred to was always "Sunder's mother" to me. When there was occasion to speak of her husband, I would say "Sunder's father." Other members of the household called him "Lalaji"—an honorific, as well as an endearing name, for "Lal" means a ruby. Had Sunder's mother no name of her own? Yes, indeed! Her name is "Lajwanti," but as the meaning thereof is "sensitive plant," which expresses her retiring nature, it shall not be used any more in this story. Besides, it is not the custom to use a lady's name—besides . . .? Oh well, it is not her name at all. It is only the name I call her in my heart, because it is herself. And there is still another reason—being what she is, gracious, sensitive, the very symbol of the home mother, I would keep her there. Even the tracks to her door have been covered up so that no one, however desirous to see her, may be able to find the way.

And what of Sunder? Sunder is the first and, at the time referred to, the only child in the home. He is

a son, and a beautiful child, as his name implies. Sunder Lal, as it is in full, means the beautiful ruby. Among the higher castes is to be found a lovely type of Hindu child—pale colouring—the shade of ripe corn, soft brown eyes and hair.

In his early days he did not wear much in the way of clothing, but this deficiency was fully made up for in jewels. He wore ornaments of gold in many places, little bells tinkled as he tumbled about. He ran straight into the heart of everybody. He ran into mine, and is still there.

Before visiting the Christian home, let us look back a few years to the time when the father and mother were Hindus. The change came quietly and without observation.

It so happened that Lalaji, while present at a Hindu festival, saw several things that interested him. He stood a long while by the tank watching the mela. There were many wonderful sights. There was to be seen the sadhu, whose merit was gained by wearing masses of iron chains, so heavy that he was unable to walk. His devoted disciples carried him about, but the railway authorities refused to convey him except as freight. So he was weighed, paid for, carried to the festival, and finally deposited by the sacred tank to be worshipped. Near by, however, was a thing that roused Lalaji to anger. It was a group of Christians, sitting on the ground, singing their religious songs; one of them, a little way off, was selling books.

“I will buy one, and then tear it to pieces before every one: that will cause them to eat shame . . . yet, no, on second thoughts, I will read it, and then refute it publicly—they shall then eat the dust.” Thus Lalaji thought within himself as he bought a small

paper-covered copy of the Gospel according to St. John.

The family saw little of Lalaji for some weeks after this. No wonder! He was preparing the grand refutation, but it was more difficult than he had anticipated. It became more difficult still, and then it became impossible; for he awoke one morning to find that a Wind had arisen from Somewhere and had turned the current of his thoughts just the other way. His former life had ebbed away, a new world lay before him.

But how to tell his people!

"Tell my mother! I cannot do it, it would break her heart."

Then! . . . was it the whisper of a child's voice from another room? Then! A new thought came to him.

"I will consult with the mother of Sunder," said Lalaji.

But there were lions in the way; even in the short way to the other room.

"What shall I say when I get there?"

Lalaji very nearly gave it up as he counted the lions one by one. It was indeed no easy matter. He had never consulted his wife before. It was not the custom; his mother would have said that it was positively indecent. Besides, she was very young—almost a child, and very shy—just a sensitive plant that shrivels up at a breath. She could not read; how could he make her understand what he had found so incomprehensible? And then—there was the possibility that she might oppose him! The incredibly submissive one might even defy him, for was she not the mother of Sunder! She might say: "Shall my

son become an outcast ! Never ! ” Then she will weep and refuse to eat . . . and . . .

“ I cannot do it,” said Lalaji—nevertheless he went. The mother of Sunder did none of these things. She caught her breath—ever so little—then just clasped her little son very close, and said : “ Where thou goest I will go—I and Sunder ! ”

At first it was strange exceedingly. Lalaji had taken a house in the city not far from the Christian church, because he desired Christian fellowship, as well as companionship and instruction for his wife.

The little home was a restful place. A tree grew in the courtyard. A sheltered corner under the veranda was set apart for cooking, just as it used to be in Hindu days. The spinning-wheel had come with them, the brass cooking vessels, and other homely things—perhaps everything excepting the household gods and her mother-in-law. This last was the strange bit of it—no mother-in-law, and, incidentally, no relations.

But it was not unpleasant. On the contrary, if any one suggested it, she said : “ Oh no, it is good.” And not too quiet and lonesome ? Her friends often asked her the question, for they could not help thinking of the contrast between her former crowded family life and her present quiet home. “ There is Sunder,” she would say ; “ he is never still, and there is Sunder’s father.”

The real strangeness consisted in outward things ; going out-of-doors with her husband, going with him to church, and in receiving visitors—again, no mother-in-law to do the honours ! But Sunder’s mother, supported by Sunder himself, did all that was required, and did it very well indeed. Still, it was not always

easy to do it. For the most part her visitors were of the Christian women who were altogether friendly and kind, but sometimes Hindu neighbours would drop in. Some of them were of the caste to which she had belonged, or were even distantly related, so they were often critical and always filled with curiosity. Although they were careful not to let her shadow fall on them, they wished to know of everything that concerned her.

Sunder's mother armed herself with discretion, for assuredly they would carry all the gossip to the clan, who would forward it soon to her own home and to that of her mother-in-law.

After a year or so, the mother-in-law herself arrived. She would not eat with them, but she actually stayed a few days—but this is anticipating.

When visitors of this sort went away it was a relief, but when a Christian friend departed she left a blank behind her in the life of the mother of Sunder. And this was the strangest thing of all, that a Christian, be she Indian or foreigner, of Hindu or Moslem descent, was not a stranger at all. A sister of the Lord Jesus had become nearer to her than one of her own race.

"I don't understand it," said Sunder's mother. For instance, there was the Indian medical woman who had become as a mother, and of whom Sunder had no fear even when she lanced his fat little wrist. She carried it through, in spite of his tears and struggles; and yet—or was it because of this—he loved her.

Then there was Mother Tara Begam. Words cannot express her sympathy, her understanding, her sense of humour, her bracing helpfulness. It was to her that Sunder's mother owed her knowledge of affairs, the ways of the new world of Christian life; and yet, not so very long ago, this honoured mother-

in-the-faith had been a Moslem. The descendants of Sita and Nur Jahan had met and found it good. "She made me feel strong when I felt ever so weak." Thus spoke the sensitive plant, while Mother Tara Begam would say that she owed a great deal to the gentle companionship of Sunder's mother.

But the caste of a former life was seldom mentioned in the Christian community. Should any one inquire about it the answer would be: "We are children of God, sisters of the Lord Jesus." This included those who had belonged to no caste at all. The "little people" were no longer despised, but regarded as brothers and sisters beloved. Every one of them gathered round their new sister. They taught her to read, comforted her, and loved her. At first, indeed, because she was a stranger, but soon for her own sake, and—there was Sunder; no one could resist his smile. It was in this way that the light of God shone into her heart. He looked upon her through the life of her husband and of her friends, and she saw Him, not as through fire and tempest, but just as a traveller sees the sun rising as he passes through the dark into day.

She kept all her pretty Indian ways, her eastern dress and some of her jewels—those that did not hurt! No ring in her nose or ears. She could now sleep in peace. As the Christian women wore white on Sundays, she would appear on that day in the softest of white muslin veils, but on secular gala days she wore silk—the coat of primrose, the skirt wide and gracious, of parrot-green. On these occasions there was not a lady in all the land who could compare with the mother of Sunder.

The daily routine was very much as of old—cooking, spinning, and the arranging of household affairs,

but the intervals, instead of being filled with gossip, were enlivened by reading and needlework. This brightness banished all the shadows. No Evil Eye ! No omens ! No fears !

After a visit to Sunder's mother, one carried away a charming picture of a life—quiet, uneventful, just a sunrising and a sunsetting, with the work of the day between. And yet, what great things lay before and behind ! No one guessed the strength of character latent in the gentle little mother. There was no mistake about it during the trial that followed after the first happy years. Sunder fell ill. At first it was thought to be malaria, but the doctor mother feared other evils and advised a change to the country ; so Lalaji moved the family to a quiet place not far off where was a church and hospital. Christian friends gathered around in most helpful and loving sympathy. The nurse was surprised at the fortitude of Sunder's mother, and her wise and skilful nursing. They all wondered : one had to look back only a few years to find the Hindu mother. What futility of grief ! What fear of omens ! What giving way to every whim of the patient, and now—this quiet, capable Christian mother, absolutely devoted and yet so firm.

Lalaji, too, was thoughtful. How he watched by the bed for hours so that his wife should rest ! But he was not so strong of heart, he leant upon the courage of Sunder's mother.

Everything was done that could be done, but one day the child died. It was a thing that clutched at the heart just to see the mother looking so quietly at her child—still smiling—fast asleep among the flowers.

Every one brought flowers. The Christians said : " Let us cover him with roses. It is not death as

among the Hindus : the child sleeps : we must show our sister that we do not weep as those that have no hope." They need not have feared ; Sunder's mother was brave all the time : even when the last words were said and the last things done, so that we could not see Sunder any more ; even when they went back without him. . . .

One day a little brother was sent to bring a message from Sunder. How radiant was the face of the little mother ! The sisters rejoiced that she was comforted, but I saw a new line on the dear face ; a line drawn by the finger of a sick child before he went away.

(iv) ONE OF GOD'S LITTLE ONES : NURI

A Type of the Many who are Lifted up out of the Dust

WHEN folks meet on a northern Indian road they invariably ask each other to what caste they belong. Should the question be put to one belonging to the depressed classes he will say : " I am one of the Little People." Afterwards, should he become a Christian, he may say : " I am one of the ' Brothers.' "

When the " Little One " of whom we speak at present was born, she was named " Ruri," which, being interpreted, means " mire." When she received her new name at baptism, it was spelt with the first letter different. The " R " was turned into " N," and the name became " light " instead of " dust." There are many " Nuris " among the brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus, so she stands as a type, and not for herself alone.

Since the beginning of the mass movement in India the Christian inquirers have been gathered together where possible into centres for instruction. A small mud church is built outside the village in the sweeper quarter, and serves for several villages. A teacher from among themselves is appointed to look after them ; a pastor visits them at intervals and holds services.

A great deal depends upon the teacher and his wife, for they are not only the spiritual guides of their own flock, but they are an example to the Hindu and Moslem inhabitants of the village ; as indeed are all the sweepers who have become Christian. They who used to be regarded as the dust of the feet of the caste people, and who are still compelled to do the menial work of the village so long as they remain there, are by education and the power of the Gospel the superiors of many caste people. The unlettered Hindu or Moslem woman is now far beneath the one, such as Nuri, who serves. God has cast down the mighty from their seat and exalted those of low degree. This is, as a rule, in a spiritual sense only, for their masters exact service from them as long as they can. Sometimes they inflict cruelty and oppress them as did the Egyptians the Israelites. Their dwellings are, as always, without the gate ; water is poured into their vessels from a distance, so that the poor earthen vessel may not touch the brass pitcher ; bread—odd pieces—thrown to them as to a dog. They are untouchable ; and, to increase their misery, one hot season the caste people refused to give them any water.

Nuri, however, held her ground. She could read, whereas her Moslem superiors could not, yet she did not become proud. When refused permission to

go to service, with the threat of no dinner, she went away hungry without a murmur. On the day that water was refused to her people she cried to God. The cry of Nuri and of all the "Little People" went up to heaven. In due course a well was sunk in their settlement; also in due course the hearts of the non-Christian villagers became less hard. Said one of them to me: "They are different from what they used to be and different from us. I don't know exactly what it is, but there is a light in their faces." Yes, that was it—a light.

Nuri became a light in a dark place. In a very practical way did she enlighten her world. "It is odd," said the Moslem headman's wife, "she does not gossip any more. I do not like it. I used to get a lot of news from her. It is awkward, too. She will not tell lies. She always used to do what I told her, but if I bid her deceive, she will answer: 'But that is not true!' 'Well, what if it is not?' 'I cannot do it,' she will say, and there is an end of it."

"She sings nicely," was another tribute, from a Hindu lady, "but not as she used to do. When I ask her to sing an old song I like, she refuses because, she says: 'It is bad.' 'What does that matter?' say I, but she will not listen to me. Then she offers to sing the songs they use in their prayer house."

These spiritual songs of the Little People are a force in the land. Set to well-known eastern tunes they win their way far and near. According to the usage of an illiterate community, the long lines are repeated and the refrain constantly recurs, so that the ignorant and unlettered and the blind can join in, and ultimately commit it to memory. They are sung with a joyful noise and to the beat of drums, so even the

deaf can hear, and as time is beaten by the clapping of hands, the smallest child can join in the accompaniment.

At a village service we all sit down on the ground. The choir beats the drums and we clap hands in rhythm. Those who have joined in these simple services can never forget the moving quality of the tunes ; nor the rendering.

It must be admitted that the dear people sing with a harsh voice, but they are improving, and now that excellent schools are being provided for boys and girls all over India, some day we shall hear the weird and touching melodies as they should be sung.

Many of the Psalms have been set to Indian tunes ; also a large number of their own hymns and songs, such as "The Dirge of the Wilderness," have been adopted, after being purified and made meet for the Master's use. Some of them have been translated into English for the sake of the friends in the West, so that they may share the beauty of their thought.

One finds that the Christian friend of God, like the eastern mystic, comparea his soul to the moth seeking the light, or when striving to express what the love of God is to his soul, he will say : "It is as the scent to the rose, the ruby to the ring."

In the East golden jewels are sometimes sold with a hollow place so that the owner may have put in what he desires. The jewel holes are often filled with glass, which the wearer can replace with a pearl when he can afford it. So the metaphor may read thus : "My heart was filled with the worthless glass of the world ; now it holds the Pearl of Great Price."

These hymns serve to illustrate the longing of the soul in the wilderness and then the finding of rest in

God at last. The original vernacular versions are of great use in evangelistic work. When Nuri is asked by a Moslem or Hindu employer, she can sing one of these sad—one might say twilight—hymns. The opening verses of loneliness and fear will appeal, as they always do to an eastern heart, where fear is never absent. But futile regret will be turned into the hope which need never be ashamed.

And so we leave Nuri and such as she—singing at her post.

May her light always shine, and her love lead many to her Saviour.

(v) MAGAR : THE SON OF TABI

MAGAR has no caste. He is neither Hindu, Moslem, nor Christian, but he must not be left out, for he is the son of the most patient woman who ever lived. Her name, Tabi, means "the obedient one." Tabi ought to have her life written, but as she did nothing other than sweep better than anybody else and never said a word worth recording, it cannot be done. By the way, the one word which it was her habit to use is golden, for it was "Yes." She always said "Yes" gladly, even when her tired heart must have bade her say "No."

But she lived in her son Magar ; he expressed her dumb but bright nature in word and deed. You see he had more time at his disposal, having nothing to do but play and mind the baby. The latter occupation was permanent : there was always a baby.

He was called Magar because he was born during the month of that name. In our hearts we sometimes called him Saint Magar, because he reminded us of the story of the little saint who on arrival at the gate of heaven was given a welcome and so great honour that every one marvelled. The reason was because he had taken everything gladly and patiently as it came : whether rain or sunshine, love or scorn.

For Magar, sometimes clothed in a rag, sometimes in nothing, was always happy, always smiling. We must not speak of the times when a tear would run down his dirty little face, simply because this so rarely happened. The tears did no harm. They showed a streak of nice, soft skin which was, as a rule, hidden and darkened by dust : and they were immediately followed by a smile of utter contentment. He had no time to think of himself, there was the baby to look after. He did it in this way : seizing the infant by whichever end was uppermost, he carried it wherever he wished to go, and set it down to cry in peace, should anything exciting call his attention. To stop its crying, he would put in its mouth a radish or a bit of melon, or whatever came to hand. When at leisure once more he would soothe the creature and give it more radish. Yes, he was a patient and kind nurse. In fact, he was nice to every one, never angry—that is, excepting on one occasion. It must be mentioned, just as a flaw in a jewel must be pointed out. Magar was, once upon a time, angry with a small boy—very angry indeed. It became necessary to administer chastisement to the small boy. As usual, he was carrying the baby, but instead of its being a handicap, he used it as a weapon. With it he thumped the enemy so hard that he fell defeated to the ground.

And what of the baby ? It cried, and got some more radish !

Magar was the general favourite. When he fell into the machinery-part of the well and was hurt, every one, high and low, came to inquire after him. There was great rejoicing when he got well.

Somehow Magar is a type of the " Little People." They are like children, naughty sometimes, but so simple, so wonderfully patient. The oppression which has ground them down for centuries has crushed them to the dust, but it has not destroyed their child-like faith and trust. They are now pressing forward by thousands towards the light and liberty of Christianity. They will never go back. If the Church does not receive them, there are other doors open ; it is a matter of urgency.

The fact that it is Magar and not his mother who speaks is significant. The sweeper woman cannot as yet speak for herself. Hers is the dumb appeal of a suffering animal. She looks at you—her brown eyes, so gentle and wistful. There is no request, no plaint. She knows nothing as yet but the burden of the day ; her religion is just to bear patiently everything as it comes.

CHAPTER IV

FROM THE WATCH-TOWER: THE FORWARD LOOK

IT was from our watch-tower on the roof of the old palace that we looked out upon the land and its necessities and heard the whisper of the wind that changes night into dawn. Again we look outward. The morning has now come, but *the sky is red*.

Once more India must face a crisis. Statesmen of all shades of political opinion are trying to solve the problem and to bring her through to happier times and to better conditions. We, who love her, stand on the watch-tower in prayer and hope.

For, as with regard to personal difficulties we looked to God, trusting that He was fashioning His Church so that all who differed might be made one, so now, during national and world-upheaval, we believe that He has provided the same haven, that He has so welded His people together that they may become the makers of peace amid warring factions.

Our eyes turn towards that building of God. Has the top-stone been laid with shoutings of "Grace! grace unto it"? Now that the scaffolding is being removed, it might seem so. And we who have been permitted to help in any way towards the building of

it are glad. We look to the appearing of a glorious thing, complete in the Lord Jesus, standing alone with Him. And we wait for His charge. Does not that Voice even now say to the Church that is in India : "*Hold fast till I come*" ?

May God keep her from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the world !

Men's hearts fail them as they look out to the coming day, for the sky is red and lowering. But the day of menace holds for the Church the challenge of opportunity. India looks to her for help, not merely as a unifying element amid disruptive forces, but as a living power to whom is committed the ministry of healing and hope ; for to whom else can she turn ? Her friends and would-be reformers have nought to offer but the counsel of despair. What is the aspiration of one of the most sincere of her leaders ? "I pray that in my next incarnation I may be born an untouchable, that I may be able to raise the outcaste."

The Church of God says that there shall be no outcastes. Let her be strong to fulfil her obligations and maintain a forward policy. Let her help India to get rid of this iniquity as well as of all else that hinders her well-being and progress. The burden of responsibility will be heavy. A large share of it belongs to the Christian women of India. Woman has ever been the inspiration and stay of religion. God can use her fine qualities for great issues, and has done so in the edification of the Church. At the present moment there is a goodly fellowship of Christian women in India serving their country. Some are taking a first place in the professions of medicine and law, now open to the women of India, and many have devoted them-

selves to the service of the Church. They heal the sick, comfort the sorrowful, teach the ignorant and the blind, reclaim those who are cast out. They go into the streets and lanes of the city and the country calling in to the Church those who will, from Hinduism and Mohammedanism.

Is it not an incentive as well as a consolation to these workers to realize that God has raised them up for the necessities of their day, even as He prepared His servants for the days that are past? As they press forward let them look up, trusting God for His grace, thanking Him for His witnesses.

From amidst the cloud each can see a face, and from the past recall a memory and a name. These names, severally dear, are the heritage of the Church.

To Shuroth Mohani Datta this book is dedicated, not only because of what she revealed to me while communing together in that upper room, but because of herself.

Many sought her friendship—Hindu, Moslem, and Christian alike found comfort from her sympathy and wise counsel. Hers was a life of influence rather than of activity, for although she served her generation well and faithfully, her memory lives not so much for what she did as by what she inspired. Shuroth Mohani ranks with Ramabai, Toru Dutt, and others, who by their spiritual and intellectual force have inspired Christian character.

So while looking back to an early impression and inspiration it is good to return to the upper room whence they came, and take a look forward with the

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faithful watchers who still gaze far out into the plain
and pray for India.

They would see her face lit with a smile, and
hearken to her voice lifted in song.

And the Lord Jesus, being filled with compas-
sion, will deliver India—“to-day, to-morrow, every
day.”

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